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EXCLUSIVE

BATMAN ARKHAM KNIGHT

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PS4

THE YEAR AHEAD



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THE WAIT?

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DUDE, WHERE'S MY CAR?



IT'S PROBABLY JUST because I've played a lot of terrible *Batman* games over the years, but I seem to be the only person who was terrified rather than excited by the prospect

of driving the Batmobile in *Arkham Knight*. So many bad memories – not least of PSone stinker *Gotham City Racer* – and I just couldn't bring myself to care that somebody had ingeniously decided to put a car in an open-world game.

But after seeing what Rocksteady is doing with it, I've changed my tune. Driving on tunnel ceilings, caning around Gotham's grim streets and flinging yourself from the driver's seat straight into a glide all look amazing and Bruce's four-wheeled co-star looks to add just enough new gameplay into the mix to keep Batman's PS4 debut from ever feeling too familiar or stale.

I think it's the enhanced sense of freedom that excites me most, not in terms of exploration but in terms of play – I'm getting a really strong *Just Cause/Sleeping Dogs* vibe from the way all of the game's systems are interlinked and flow gloriously into one another. You just know there are gonna be Trophies for chaining driving, flight and combat into one long combo, but it's just so satisfying that I'd do it even if there wasn't a virtual bronze thing at stake.

In all honesty, I'd rather have seen Rocksteady offered the freedom of a new IP but realistically, that was always about as likely as Activision giving *Call Of Duty* a year off. But based on the simply stunning open world and the arsenal of new toys thrown into the mix, I'll happily welcome Mr Wayne to PS4 with open wings later this year. In any case, the game's announcement has set off a whole new wave of gravel-throated growling and Tom Hardy Bane impressions around the office, and that can only be a good thing.

Enjoy the issue, and I'll see ya online.

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swoops onto PS4!

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BATMAN: ARKHAM KNIGHT

Rocksteady reveals all on the Dark Knight's incredible PS4 debut

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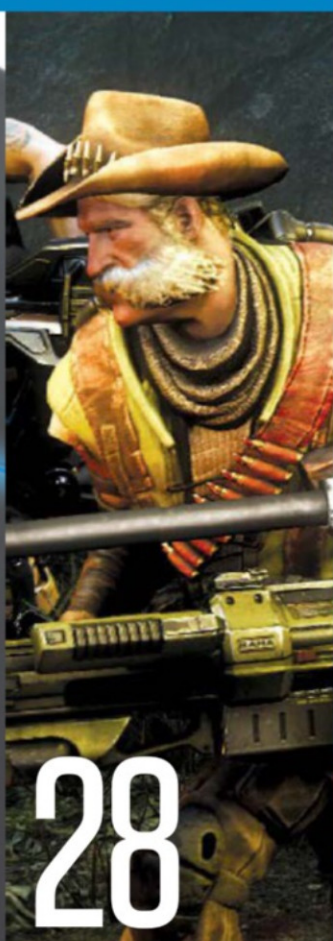
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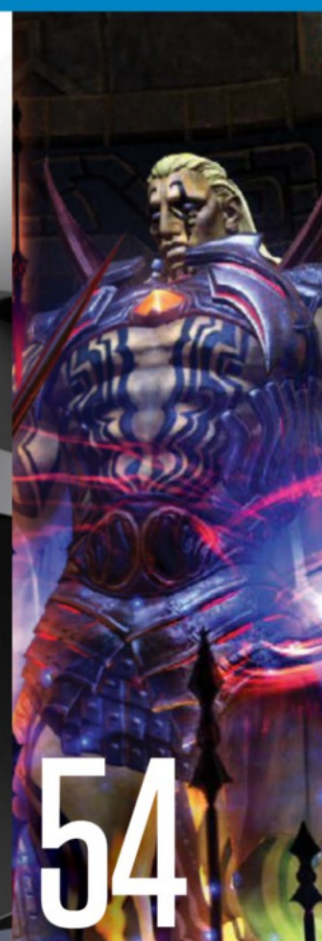
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PS4: THE YEAR AHEAD

So much to look forward to!

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Four against one? We like those odds

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Hack into all the latest details

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Returning to the classic FPS

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PS4

THE

YEAR AHEAD

Now that all that launch business is out the way, the PS4's line-up is starting to look rather healthy. We've combined confirmed dates, insider intel and a little educated guesswork to sketch out the next 12 months, and one thing is clear: we don't have enough free time...



Counting down the days? You probably should be...

MUST LOVE DOGS?

After such a long wait, it's interesting to see how opinion on *Watch Dogs* has changed. We've gone from being extremely excited to skeptical and concerned, worried that it might not be all it's cracked up to be. Only one way to find out...

WATCH DOGS

Ubisoft's delayed open-world hackathon finally hits the shelves next month. Play as John Cusack lookalike Aiden Pearce and take it to 'the man' in a setup that feels a bit too similar to *inFamous: Second Son*. Still, authority-defying stories aside, the combination of third-person shooting, driving and the ability to hack any electronic device makes *Watch Dogs* an extremely exciting prospect. About time.

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ΔOX□ Can't wait to take down Mecha Hitler again.

WOLFENSTEIN

Old-school shooting in an alternate history where the Nazis won the war, *Wolfenstein* has come out of nowhere to become one of our most anticipated games. We remember the days of dual-wielding miniguns, and they were good.

BOUND BY FLAME

Itching for some fantasy role-playing in the style of *Kingdoms Of Amalur*? You could do worse than *Bound By Flame*, a new RPG from small French studio Spiders. It looks a bit like a budget *Skyrim*.



ΔOX□ Some people do this in real life. Crazy people.

TRIALS FUSION

If you don't like *Trials*, odds are you also probably hate fun. Physics-based motocross action returns, this time with a greater emphasis on huge tricks and crazy, sci-fi styled courses. We anticipate swearing.

Expect loads
of new PS4
announcements

"WE EXPECT TO HEAR
MORE ABOUT THE NEW
UNCHARTED GAME"



△×□ Your character won't look anywhere near as cool as this guy. Sorry.

THE ELDER SCROLLS ONLINE

It's already out on PC, but *The Elder Scrolls Online* hits PS4 in June. Journey through the world of Tamriel, exploring the lands of Skyrim, Morrowind and more as you forge your own destiny in this huge MMO.



SNIPER ELITE 3

Take a trip to Africa and, while enjoying the scenery, snipe the balls off some nasty Nazis (literally, in some cases). A new, open-world approach and even gorier kill-cams make this one of our most anticipated.

E3

E3 this year takes place from 10 to 12 June, close enough for us to start getting really excited. Last year was all about the hardware, so now it's time for the games to take centre stage. Among other things, we expect to hear more about the new *Uncharted* game, as well as information on Sony's Project Morpheus VR headset, and maybe some more about the plans for the PlayStation Now streaming service.

MURDERED: SOUL SUSPECT

A supernatural whodunit from Square Enix, *Murdered* casts you as a hard-boiled detective who finds himself a ghost after being... murdered. He doesn't remember who killed him or why, and therein we have a premise. Although, even if you do find out, you are still dead. Bit of a lose/lose situation, huh?



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△×□ Is smoking still bad for your health if you are a ghost?

Few confirmed games, but we're expecting these...

DIABLO III ULTIMATE EVIL EDITION

The PS4 version of *Diablo III* will contain the full main game as well as the excellent *Reaper Of Souls* expansion. We'd imagine it to release some time around July, filling in a gap in both Sony's and Blizzard's schedule. If you haven't played it yet, get on it – it's a great game, and this will be the definitive version.

"IT'S A GREAT GAME, AND THIS WILL BE THE DEFINITIVE VERSION"



DRIVECLUB

Another game we'd peg as coming out in the summertime, *Driveclub* has to be almost done by this point (right?) and Sony must want to get it out as soon as possible. It's still gonna be free on PS Plus, yeah? Cool.



EA SPORTS UFC

After the death of old publisher THQ, the *UFC* licence has moved over to the sports games overlord, EA. We love anything that involves punching, and we can't wait to see what EA Canada does with the sport of MMA. Expect this spring/summer. If it's as good as their *Fight Night* boxing games, this is one we'll be spending a lot of time with.

SHERLOCK HOLMES: CRIMES AND PUNISHMENTS

The newest *Sherlock* game looks to be borrowing heavily (read: stealing) from the über-popular BBC show, with words appearing in the environment to signal Holmes's intuition. Again, no specific date yet, but expect it around this time. Considering the success of the show, we imagine a few new fans will pick up the game, giving a boost to a series that's consistently been merely okay up until now.



A summer drought seems pretty unlikely this year

PLANETSIDE 2

It's been out on PC for years now, so hopefully Sony's own MMO FPS will hit the PS4 sooner rather than later. It's definitely coming in 2014, and we'd expect to see it around the summer to plug up the schedule as we wait for the Christmas deluge.

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ULTRA STREET FIGHTER IV

A slightly cheeky entry, as it's PS3 only for now, but we'd expect *Ultra Street Fighter IV* to hit PS4 at some point too. This is the definitive version of *Street Fighter IV* (and this time, we think they might actually mean it) and a must for fighting game fans.

△○×□ Poison is but one of five new characters in *USFIV*.

DYING LIGHT

Another game we'd expect to see in the summer, as sending *Dying Light* out in the winter would be sending it out to... die. Techland games tend to be good in slightly broken kind of way, and this one has added free running!

△○×□ With three factions at war, there's always some action going on in *PlanetSide 2*.

THE EVIL WITHIN

Shinji Mikami's return to the genre he created looks to be just as spooky and action-packed as its main inspiration, *Resident Evil 4*. We love a good scare, and the return of the maestro of survival horror is a real coup that will hopefully lead to an excellent game. Even if it turns out to not be too scary, it at least looks like it plays well.

"THE RETURN OF THE MAESTRO OF SURVIVAL HORROR IS A REAL COUP"



Bungie's coming to PS4, and it's bringing friends...

"WE MIGHT NOT EVER
NEED TO PLAY ANOTHER
GAME AGAIN"

FIFA/ PES 2015

If you like football (and apparently, a lot of people do) then September will be a *FIFA* (or *PES*, if you are weird/hardcore) month. Get ready to queue for hours at a midnight launch to play some videogame football only slightly different to the stuff you've been playing already. Or something less cynical...

TOKYO GAME SHOW

TGS runs from 18 to 21 September this year. Expect to find out more about a bunch of Japanese games, so we are hoping for some info on Square's upcoming boy-band simulator, *Final Fantasy XV*.

EVOLVE

Evolve is slated for 'July to September' but we'd bet on the latter. A four-versus-one, multiplayer shooter from the guys behind *Left 4 Dead*, *Evolve* sounds like a great way to mix up the regular FPS template.

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DESTINY

One of our most anticipated games is coming on 9 September. A combination of MMO, RPG and FPS by Bungie (those guys that made *Halo*), if *Destiny* lives up to its potential then we might not ever need to play another game again. We love *Halo* (we're not even sorry – they're great games) and Bungie finally coming over to PlayStation is really good news.



Huge releases every week, but no time to play them all!

BATMAN: ARKHAM KNIGHT

The big release for this month is undoubtedly *Batman: Arkham Knight*, coming 14 October. Drive around a huge Gotham City in the one and only Batmobile while pounding bad-guy face into the tarmac like only the Caped Crusader can. Perhaps best of all, it's next-gen only, so Rocksteady can focus entirely on getting the most out of the PS4.

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ASSASSIN'S CREED: UNITY

The latest *Assassin's Creed* game is set in the French Revolution but is expected to still mainly consist of running on rooftops and stabbing people, albeit this time with a fancier accent and tastier pastries. Ooh la la!



MAD MAX

The *Mad Max* game could turn out to be a big disappointment, but we've got a funny feeling that it might be pretty good. Every now and then one of these B-list games turns out to be a surprisingly good time, and we do love the idea of an Australian *Fallout*. Can we have a Tina Turner cameo, please?



AOXO We aren't afraid of you... much.

ALIEN: ISOLATION

Can The Creative Assembly prove that it can make more than *Total War* games? A first-person horror with little to no combat, *Alien: Isolation* looks to be the *Alien* game we always wanted. Wipe Colonial Marines from your brain and get excited.

FRENCH CONNECTION

We thought we were bored of *Assassin's Creed*, but *Black Flag* was so surprisingly great that we are willing to give the franchise another chance. Hopefully *Unity* will continue to bring fresh ideas to a series in dire need of them.

One hectic month followed by a quiet one, as per usual...



THE ORDER: 1886

Scheduled for the tail end of 2014, *The Order* is a PS4 exclusive from the talented troupe known as Ready At Dawn, the team behind the great PSP *God Of War* games. Set in an alternative-history London awash with magic, knights, monsters, huge guns and smog (that's accurate, at least), what we've seen up to this point is both extremely good-looking and extremely intriguing.



HOTLINE MIAMI 2 WRONG NUMBER

The eagerly-anticipated sequel to one of our favourite indie games, *Hotline Miami 2* is promising more action, more neon-soaked gore, more pumping Eighties trance and more insatiable rage whenever you inevitably die. Plus, more animal masks!

CALL OF DUTY

Whatever the next *Call Of Duty* is, it's coming, and it's going to sell a lot. Whether the series has peaked in terms of sales is yet to be seen, but public reception seems to be finally sliding a little – the lukewarm reception to *Ghosts* is proof of this. Still, it will be interesting to see what Activision decides to do next with the franchise.



△×□ Another *Call Of Duty* game! Surprise!



DRAGON AGE: INQUISITION

After the disappointment of *Dragon Age II*, BioWare has a lot to prove with *Inquisition*. It's got pretty graphics and big dragons, but we aren't sold just yet. Can the franchise that always felt like an afterthought after *Mass Effect* finally find its time in the sun?

A new year begins,
and the big games
just keep coming



THE WITCHER 3: WILD HUNT

We love CD Projekt RED and we love *The Witcher*, so we would quite like *The Witcher 3* to be out sooner rather than later. An open world RPG with incredible combat and a legitimately adult story, *The Witcher* has been one of our favourite series on PC, so to see it come to PS4 is wonderful.

"AN OPEN WORLD RPG WITH INCREDIBLE COMBAT AND A LEGITIMATELY ADULT STORY"



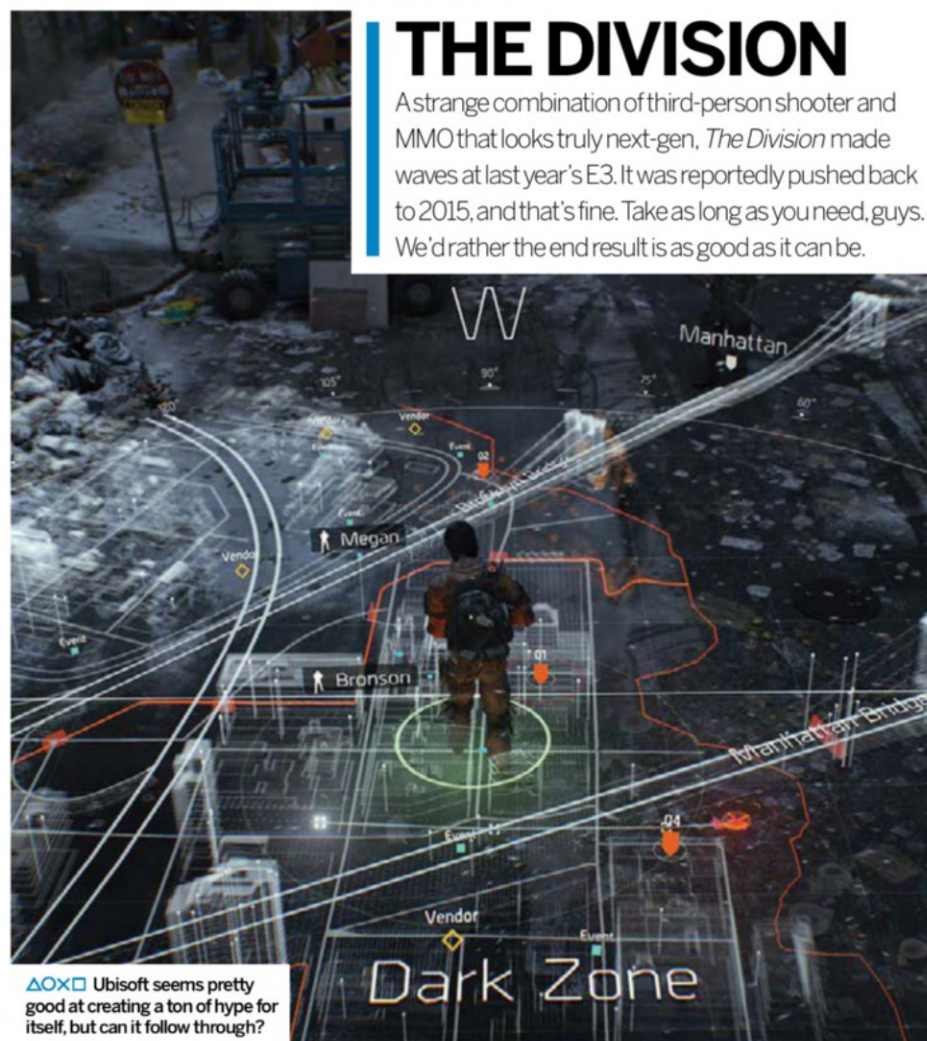
MIGHTY NO. 9

Being the huge *Mega Man* fans we are, we pledged some cash for Keiji Inafune's *totally unrelated* 2D action-platformer starring a small blue robot who steals his enemy's powers. Sounds familiar, huh? Yes, it's a new *Mega Man* game in all but name, but that's exactly what we want. If Capcom won't do it, we'll just have to fund it ourselves!



SOMA

A new survival-horror from Frictional Games, the team behind *Amnesia: Outlast* was decent and *Daylight* seems like an interesting concept, but this is the one we're most excited about.



THE DIVISION

A strange combination of third-person shooter and MMO that looks truly next-gen, *The Division* made waves at last year's E3. It was reportedly pushed back to 2015, and that's fine. Take as long as you need, guys. We'd rather the end result is as good as it can be.

ΔOX Δ Ubisoft seems pretty good at creating a ton of hype for itself, but can it follow through?

OLDER AND WISER

Set a time after the events of *Arkham City*, this Batman clearly has a few problems. Luckily, his snazzy new Batsuit seems well equipped to take down crime.

LOOKING UNREAL

Despite being PS4 only, *Arkham Knight* will still run on the Unreal 3 engine rather than the newer Unreal 4. Don't worry though, it looks amazing anyway.



SHARE THIS



△×□ Every hero needs a villain.

KUNG FU FIGHTING

My combo is bigger than yours

The timing-based, careful combat style of the *Arkham* games has since become the go-to system for most action titles, a testament to how influential it has been. With the potential to rack up huge combos, sharing your best will definitely be an impetus to step back into the lab and get some training done.



△×□ Barbara Gordon will help out as the super-smart Oracle. Will we see other sidekicks as well?

ETA 14 OCTOBER | DEV ROCKSTEADY STUDIOS | PUB WARNER BROS | TWITTER @BATMANARKHAM

Batman: Arkham Knight

Bat to the future



THE BAT IS back. *Arkham Origins* was great but felt like a stopgap and wasn't developed by Rocksteady Studios. The *Arkham* series belongs to Rocksteady, and now it aims to follow up *City* and end the trilogy with *Arkham Knight*.

Perhaps the most exciting early news about *Arkham Knight* is that it will be new generation only: tough luck, PS3 fans. According to producer Dax Ginn, the decision to stick to PS4 and Xbox One was mainly down to one thing.

"The next-gen decision came down to one topic: the Batmobile. What do we have to do to make the Batmobile work?" says Ginn. "Even before we finished *Arkham City*, Sefton Hill the game director was thinking about this game, and we'd always planned to do a trilogy. The final piece of the puzzle for us was, how do we wrap all this up as a singular, complete, ultimate Batman experience? And when you think Batman, you think Batmobile."

"It was the one thing we hadn't done. Once we decided we were going to commit to the Batmobile, all these other technical decisions were made for us. We knew that we had to do it right – the imagination of the experience of driving the Batmobile that people have is that it's fast, that it's destructive, it's

kind of a tank but it's also highly technical – all of those things can only be done on next-gen, so that was a gameplay decision which drove technical decisions from that point."

The game takes place once again in Gotham City, although the world will be much larger than that of *Arkham City*. After all, you need to be able to drive your Batmobile around, and *Arkham City*, while densely packed full of things to do, wouldn't take longer than a couple of minutes to drive end-to-end. You might wonder if a fancy car is really that much of a big deal, but it's all that and more according to Ginn.

"Fans would never let us forget about it! It's the most anticipated feature on every comment we get. People have just been hammering us since *Arkham Asylum* for the Batmobile. Luckily, we wanted to do it as well, we just needed the tech to do it."

"It's just not something we'd be able to do on PS3 and Xbox 360, not in the way that people imagine it. It's the power fantasy of driving this legendary vehicle; if it can only do a top speed of 25mph that's not that power fantasy and that's why we couldn't have done it previously."

Our Bat-story this time is that The Scarecrow has united all of Batman's disparate rogues gallery to team up for one night and finally take down the

Caped Crusader. Gotham has been evacuated so sorry, still no civilians. It's a shame, as having a city full only of bad guys to punch hurts immersion, but it's an understandable concession to make when it comes to game design.

The benefits of next-gen are many, according to Ginn. "We're pretty used to the old systems because we had so much time working with them. I think any new generation is difficult, but certainly our engine team, they don't have to say 'no' anymore to our creative guys."

"I was talking to our lead engine coder and on the previous generation, he had to say to our art team, 'you can't do characters of that poly count', or, 'you can't do textures of that resolution'. But, he was saying the other day that, this time around, he just doesn't find himself saying 'no' very often. That just comes down to the hardware of next-gen."

With the third game in a franchise, Rocksteady faces the 'Metroid problem' – how does it start Batman out at a low level of power at the beginning of the game, without all his fancy upgrades and gadgets? The solution is an interesting one, according to Ginn. However, it doesn't take long before he starts talking about the Batmobile again. The guy really loves that car.



"I THINK GENERALLY, IF WE FEEL GOOD ABOUT SOMETHING, WE KIND OF KNOW THAT FANS ARE GOING TO LIKE IT"

△×□ The Batmobile! It's a really big deal, if Rocksteady is to be believed.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- △ Rocksteady is back with the final entry in the Arkham quadrilogy!
- A huge, open Gotham City to explore at your leisure.
- × A new driving element to explore in the form of the Batmobile.
- A brand new villain, plus loads and loads of old ones.

"The concern is that Batman becomes overpowered. The way we balanced that is by ramping up the threat that he faces. This time around, Scarecrow has returned and united all of the rogues gallery, all of the supervillains, so this is a threat that Batman has never faced before – this unified wall. In that context, he doesn't feel overpowered, he feels like he's at the right level of power to face this new threat.

"Similarly, with adding the Batmobile, we didn't want it to feel like, 'here is a brand new thing that could never have existed before' – from a narrative perspective we want it to feel like Batman has always had the Batmobile, we've just unveiled it here.

"It's something we're very consciously aware of not to make the game feel like a driving game, it has to feel like this synergy between man and machine. The in and out gameplay is something we've put so much effort into. Just getting out of the Batmobile and getting back into the Batmobile should feel like a lot of fun and that's why we've got this eject and summon move, which is awesome – one of my favourite bits.

"We gave the task of programming the Batmobile to the guy who coded Batman. So, all of the experience that he's developed over *Arkham Asylum* and *Arkham City* in making a character in Batman, he was then tasked with doing the same

with the Batmobile. Which, on the one-hand is really high risk, but on the other hand, it gives you a vehicle that's full of character and really intimately linked to Batman because Adam has been responsible for creating both of these things.

"In hindsight, I think that was a really smart idea and it makes the Batmobile feel really unique in that respect, it doesn't just feel like a car, it feels like a genuine character."

You might be wondering what 'Arkham Knight' means – is it referring to Batman in a sloppy attempt to come up with a title for a fourth *Arkham* game? No sir, as the Arkham Knight will be an entirely original villain, making his first ever appearance in the game. Ginn took us through the thought process of deciding to use a totally new character.

"It came from thinking about the way that we built interactions and engagements between Batman and the other members of the rogues gallery. They all reflect some aspect of his personality.

"From an intellectual perspective, it's Riddler – that's who he engages with intellectually. When you talk about fate and destiny and that aspect of his personality, the tragedy of his childhood, Two-Face is a mirror to him in that respect. So, each of the supervillains connects with Batman in a very specific way and he is a collection of all of

those things, but we never really had a villain who can engage with Batman on a physical, powerful, combat level.

"Combat is such a significant part of the game for us, so we wanted a villain that could really challenge him very physically, so the Arkham Knight was conceived with that gameplay idea in mind. The first thing we did with him was to develop what's his role in the story, how does he genuinely challenge Batman in a way that he's never been challenged before, and then we pitched all of that to DC Comics and then collaborated with them on the look of him and to design his aesthetic so that it's representative of the function and purpose that he fulfils in the game."

Introducing a new character into a canon so beloved by fans is always risky, as the potential for negative reaction is never far away. Still, so far the *Arkham* games have been extremely well received (not surprising, considering their quality), and Ginn is confident his team understands what the average Bat-fan wants.

"I think generally, if we feel good about something, we kind of know that fans are going to like it – I don't know if that comes out the right way. The design of Penguin, for example is a really different take on Penguin – he's got this cockney accent, he's got the bottle in his eye... it's pretty brutal, gritty stuff. All of



PLAY VIDEO

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YouTube www.youtube.com/PlayMagUK

△××□ Handshakes for justice.

our characters have a mature angle, a gritty angle, but also quite a psychological angle to them.

"When we were designing the Arkham Knight, so long as we feel like we're doing the right thing every step of the design process, I think fans will trust us when it comes to the final piece. Checking that with DC as well, that's an important part of it. It's so awesome to have that open creative collaboration with them, because if we were wildly wrong, they would say something."

It's very easy to feel positive about *Batman: Arkham Knight* right now. Rocksteady is back on the series that made it famous, Gotham is bigger than ever before, the Batmobile is here and the whole thing is being developed specifically for next-gen consoles. The *Arkham* combat system, so amazing and revolutionary a few years ago, has since been stolen (sorry, 'borrowed') and become the standard for third-person action games. Can Rocksteady do it all over again, and set the bar for a new generation?

Sam Smith

BATMAN: ARKHAM KNIGHT is being developed by Rocksteady Studios. Check the website for more details: www.batmanarkhamknight.com



"PLANETSID 2 DOES PVP COMBAT ON A SCALE THAT BLOWS EVERY OTHER GAME ON PS4 CLEAN OUT OF THE WATER"



△○×□ Trust us, we've played it on PC and can vouch that the scale of PlanetSide 2 is unbelievable.



SHARE THIS

BASE ASSAULT

War's better with friends

Practically everything in *PlanetSide 2* demands an audience, but pulling off the perfect combined assault between infantry, artillery and aircraft is a beautiful thing. Hoofing it past an enemy's defences has a *Saving Private Ryan* feel about it. Except unlike the D-Day Landings, *PlanetSide 2* litters its bases with things like jump pads that cannon you through the air in a way that BMX-riding GoPro users can only dream.





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PlanetSide 2

In AD 2014, space-based console war was beginning



WE DON'T LIKE to concede anything to the elitist mouse-fondlers of the PC community, but around the time that *Destiny* was wowing crowds at E3 on consoles, there may have been just the tiniest amount of contemptuous sniffing echoing faintly through the halls of communities like Steam. Bungie's space opera promised guns and hover tanks and cooperative struggles against giant robot boss monsters, and it all looked very suitably ambitious and next-gen. Unless you were a PC gamer, in which case it looked relatively current-gen. Because it looked quite a bit like *PlanetSide 2*, which, ahem, came out for PC in 2012.

OK, so it's not a completely fair comparison. Where *Destiny* promises a rich single-player component to its spacefaring, *PlanetSide 2* is a solidly multiplayer affair, with a thin coating of story brushed over the top to explain why its three factions are locked into total war for the planet of Auraxis. But if you want to battle against waves of space marines fighting on foot, in tanks or in hovering gunships, *PlanetSide 2* does that on a PvP scale that blows every other game on PS4 clean out of the water.

Details on the PS4 port of the game are thinner on the ground than a tarmaced supermodel, but the PC version can support up to 2,000 players slogging it out across its massive battle arenas at once. You

aren't pinging rockets at waves of AI drones – every character from a grunt up to the chopper pilot circling overhead is a real person plugging in your coordinates and planning your demise.

The scale of *PlanetSide 2*'s battles is the game's selling point. Unlike various shooters, you're not a one-man army who can dominate the scoreboard with a decent kill/death ratio – you're just one soldier out of hundreds, battling to stay alive. There are different roles to play, too, even beyond the basic classes of Assault, Infiltrator, Heavy, Engineer etc. It might be tempting to charge the enemy base alone, but after a couple of attempts that end with you blasted to smithereens by the enemy base defences, you might find the best way to help your side to victory is to selflessly hop into the cabin of a troop transport and trundle a squad of fellow soldiers off to war.

Impressive as it is in scope, the PC version has a couple of niggles that we're hoping will get lost in translation on the PS4. The first is that while the game contains a large upgrade system, there's a tangible weighting towards getting players to stump up real cash to advance more quickly. *PlanetSide 2* is a free-to-play game, which makes this in some ways a necessary evil, but there are other games out there using the same model that limit the use of real-world cash to aesthetic items. To the game's credit,

the weapons you start with aren't underpowered, and progression doesn't force you into forking out for upgrades, but the spectre of microtransactions and their hideous, deformed cousin 'pay-to-win' still looms just stage left of the cash store.

The second issue (again, with the PC version – there's no footage of the PS4 port available), is that, while *PlanetSide 2* has a darling personality, it's got nothing on the looks of even that steamrolled supermodel we mentioned earlier. It's not an ugly game, but it's also no *Killzone Shadow Fall*. Fingers crossed for a graphics bump when it lands on PS4.

If your spider sense has picked up an air of speculation in this preview, it's because Sony is keeping details on the PS4 port locked away in the bottom of the castle well – we know the UI is being redesigned and that the game won't require PS Plus to play, but that's pretty much it. But don't let the silence fool you. *PlanetSide 2* might not have had the marketing that the other as-was next-gen titles had last year, but it tramples its competitors' 32 and 64 player limits under the jackboots of 2,000 charging space marines.

Rich Wordsworth

PLANETSIDE 2 is currently being terra-formed by Sony's orbiting space station. For more information, check out the website at www.planetside2.com

△×□ Each region of the map can be controlled by any one of the three factions by ousting enemies from their bio-domes.

ETA OCTOBER | DEV UBISOFT | PUB UBISOFT | TWITTER @ASSASSINSCREED

Assassin's Creed: Unity

Parlez-vous Français?



YOU DIDN'T REALLY think it was over, did you? A new *Assassin's Creed* every year has become one of life's inevitabilities, like death and taxes. In fact, this year we are going to have two of them: one for PS4 and another just for PS3.

It wasn't supposed to have been revealed yet, but thanks to some handy internet leaks, we know the next-gen *AC* game this year will be *Assassin's Creed: Unity*, set during the French Revolution that occurred from 1789 to 1799.

This instantly throws up some alarm bells, as after the disappointing *ACIII* we really enjoyed *Black Flag* for two reasons: being a pirate, and sailing around (whilst being a pirate). Setting the game in 18th Century France makes us think that all the boating may have to be removed from *Unity*, a huge shame.

Still, the small trailer we've seen so far looks stunning, clearly benefiting from being developed specifically for next-gen consoles. *Black Flag* was a beautiful game, but now the development team doesn't have to worry about making stuff work on inferior hardware.

An interesting new feature we've seen from the leaked screens are 'parkour up' and 'parkour down' buttons, signalling perhaps the first major change to the game's control scheme since the series started. Sloppy, sticky free-running has always been one of the biggest problems with *Assassin's Creed*, so the change has been a long time coming.

We know we will be controlling a new main character, but given the similarity in timeframe, we wouldn't be surprised if the rubbish Connor from *ACIII* pops up at some point. We'd probably prefer he didn't, but knowing our luck it's going to happen.

Otherwise, we still don't know all that much about *Assassin's Creed: Unity*, so time for some speculation. The French Revolution setting has a ton of potential for great set pieces, and in true *Assassin's Creed* fashion we expect to have a secret role in pretty much every important thing that happened in the ten-year period.

For example, imagine how exciting a recreation of the storming of the Bastille could be, watching from the rooftops as a swell of rebels fights against loyalist soldiers and an entire decade of conflict is begun. This is one of the best things about the franchise, exploring history (albeit, a wildly fictionalised version) and learning new things. Of course, the Templars inevitably being behind the French

aristocracy will be neither historically accurate nor a surprising plot twist.

So when does it all become too much? We would have said, after *ACIII*, that it was time for the series to call it day. But credit to Ubisoft, it found a way to prove us wrong with the excellent *Black Flag*. Still, the best things about *Assassin's Creed IV* were the new, pirate-based elements. A franchise that seems to get better the further away from its original source material is one in a strange position, caught between the need to change and maintaining a sense of its own identity.

But Ubisoft, if you are listening: please, please, PLEASE get rid of the awful modern-day sections. We don't play *Assassin's Creed* to give secret files to Danny Wallace – we play it to sail about and stab stuff. More of that, and you'll be onto a winner.

Sam Smith

ASSASSIN'S CREED: UNITY is being developed by Ubisoft. Check the website for more details: assassinscreed.ubi.com

"THE FRENCH REVOLUTION SETTING HAS A TON OF POTENTIAL FOR GREAT SET PIECES"



AOX Exploring the French Revolution and learning more about it first-hand is one of the most exciting aspects of *Unity*.

WHAT YOU'RE SAYING...

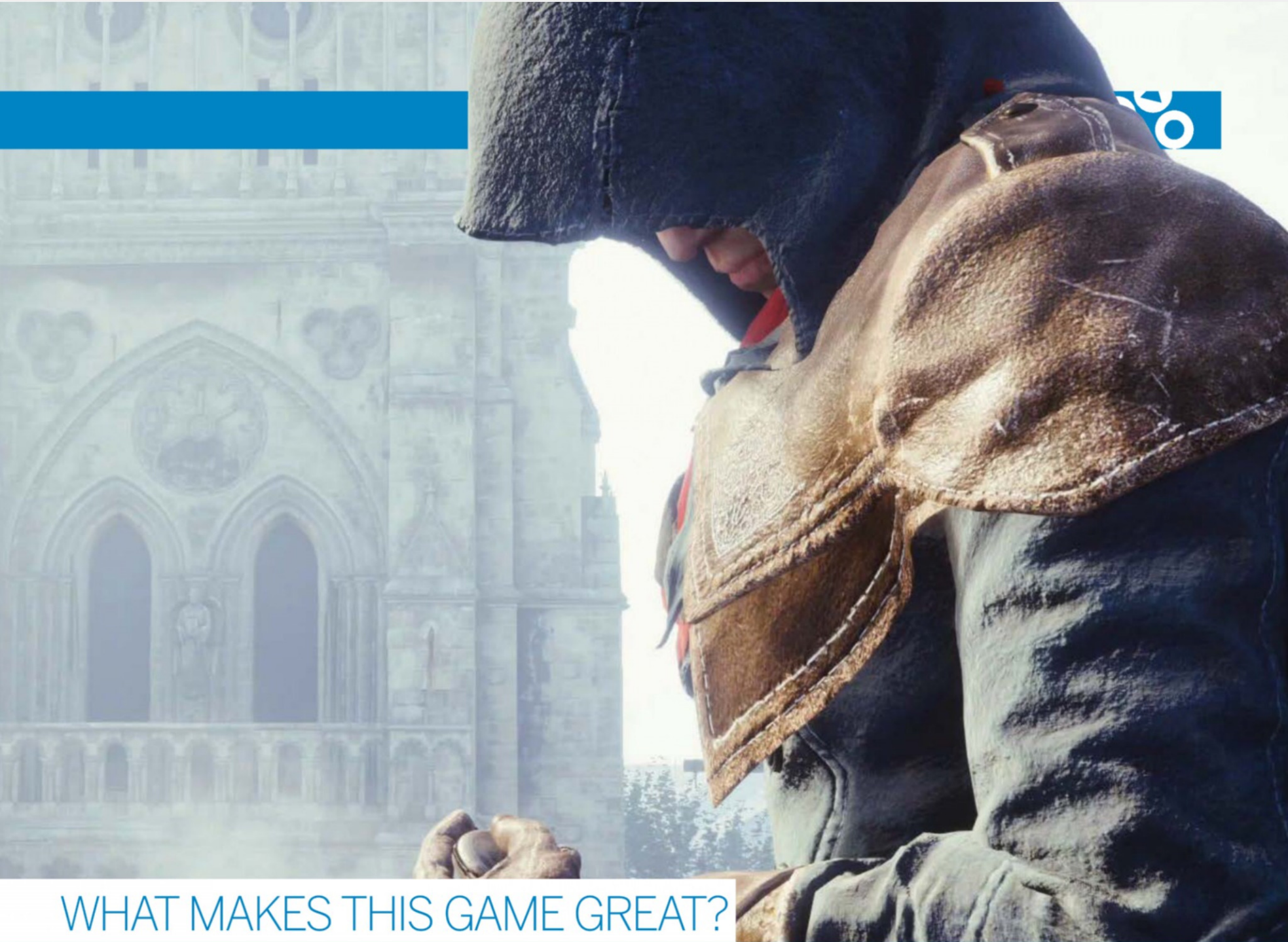
je pense que ca peut etre interessant mais j'aimerais voir du gameplay d'abord
@RobThez

After AC:B, the series has still been stilted with uneven, dull and buggy basic gameplay. I don't expect anything different.
@Ward_17

theres a new assassins creed?
@ciaRky_maNn

Next Gen only is what makes this stand out! *Black Flag* is awesome but this will be amazing. 1080p 60fps well on PS4 at least :-)
@Mr_W_V_B

AOX Considering the assassin outfit is supposed to help you blend in, it does look pretty different to what everyone else is wearing.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- More *Assassin's Creed*, if you are still into that sort of thing.
- A really interesting idea setting it during the French Revolution.
- Developing the game specifically for next-gen means pretty graphics.
- Hopefully, more awesome sailing and nautical combat.



△OX□ 18th Century France has a ton of potential for creating beautiful scenery and architecture.





ETA 2014 | DEV SONY | PUB SONY | TWITTER @EVERQUEST_NEXT

EverQuest Next

Massively Multiplayer Minecraft?



MMOS ON CONSOLE seem to be coming into their own, with current games like *DC Universe Online* and *Final Fantasy XIV* standing next to newcomers like *The Elder Scrolls Online*. While these titles have done well at transferring a PC-based genre over to a controller, the gameplay is little different. Only one game on the horizon seems to be changing things up, and that game is *EverQuest Next*.

Well, half of it is *EverQuest Next*. The other half is *EverQuest Next Landmark*, a creation suite similar to *Minecraft* that will let players create assets that may then be used in the actual game. We still don't know if *Landmark* will make it to PS4 due to the technical nature of the program and the need for mouse control, but the things created with it will make it to the PS4 version, at very least.

EverQuest Next appears to be taking a lot of cues from *Minecraft*, but before you go rolling your eyes, old-school MMO fans, please understand that this is still very much a game. Public quests called Rallying Cries will bring the server together to construct cities, drive out invasions and create defences, among other things. Crucially, any constructed elements will remain in the world once the event is over, lending a feeling of progression and story that a lot of MMOs lack due to an overly static world.

Although it will be launching on PC first, *EverQuest Next* has clearly been developed with a controller in mind. Only a few abilities will be on hand at once, so the stacked keyboard hotbars familiar to *World Of Warcraft* fans shouldn't be necessary. Being made by Sony itself, we expect *EverQuest Next* to make great use of all the features of the DualShock 4 and

PS4, such as using the touch pad to navigate menus. There has never been a more MMO-friendly console.

The biggest feature of *EverQuest Next* is the world itself, created entirely with voxels. What this means is that almost everything in this new version of Norrath is destructible, to some degree. Sony has spoken about being able to dig down into the world, finding randomly generated dungeons and caves as you venture further underground.

Destroyed scenery will regenerate over time, but the prospect for griefing remains high. Imagine trapping someone in a huge pit with no way for them to escape. Sony has made clear that this is one of its largest priorities, finding ways to make such a huge, malleable sandbox fun and fair for every player.

EverQuest Next Landmark seems to be Sony's clever way of scratching the creative itches of players

WHAT YOU'RE SAYING...

have more interest in it since being disappointed by ESO, though still not convinced.
@EdenFrankham

looks awesome, but hope the landmark bit comes to ps4 as well
@JaburoBase

don't care about mmos, sorry. Rather play games that have an ending
@aaaaaaba

sounds cool but I hope it plays ok on pad
@DEATHPOTATO

looks a hell of a lot better than elder scrolls online, lol
@bostin215

△×□ Being able to dig down into the earth will bring a sense of exploration and wonder that most MMOs seem to lack.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

△ Finally, a fully destructible game world in an MMO!

○ Dig down deep into the world and discover hidden caves and dungeons.

× It's forward thinking and ambitious – clearly designed with the PS4 in mind.

○ Create your own assets in *Landmark* and sell them for real money!

while getting them to do development work for free. In this separate game, players can lay claim to a patch of land and build on it as they choose. The plan is for players to be able to sell their own created assets, although to what extent is yet to be seen. Sony has also said it may use creations in the actual game itself, but will make sure the creators are compensated.

There's still a lot to learn about *EverQuest Next*, but this is the most interested we've been in an MMO since *World Of Warcraft* a decade ago. It's no coincidence that this is also the first time since that a game has really attempted to change the genre.

Sam Smith

EVERQUEST NEXT is being developed by Sony Online Entertainment. Check the website for more details:
www.everquestnext.com



△×□ You could play as an elf, if you suck, or you could play as a LION PERSON. Easy choice, really.

ETA 6 JUNE | DEV AIRTIGHT GAMES | PUB SQUARE ENIX | TWITTER @MURDERED

Murdered: Soul Suspect

Investigating the ghostly apparition of PlayStation's spectral detective drama



ALSO ON PS3

WHAT A MISERABLE life that of a videogame detective must be. Despite your best efforts, hardly a day must go by without the call coming in that a maniac protagonist has driven a dumper truck through a cafe, buzzed over the neighbourhood dropping pipe bombs from a helicopter, or started bludgeoning your colleagues to death with a dildo bat and uploading their final moments to Ustream. Videogame detectives are tireless public servants doing a thankless job, and with the exception of *LA Noire*, get none of the recognition they deserve.

Murdered: Soul Suspect is out to redress that imbalance. You play as ace detective Ronan O'Connor, whose most recent case takes a turn for the worse when a perp tosses him through a window, then shoots him seven times in the chest for good measure while he burbles to death on the street. Miraculously, O'Connor walks away from this. But only in the sense that ghosts can walk.

So begins a very *LA Noire*/*Heavy Rain*-ish looking detective thriller with a ghostly twist. O'Connor's keen to discover just who it was that offed him so decisively, but as a spectre trapped on the other side (known in *Murdered*'s universe as 'the Dusk'), his interactions with the flesh-and-blood world of Salem, Massachusetts are restricted. No intimidating witnesses with terrifying apparitions or flying crockery – O'Connor's afterlife is one of silent exploration and out-of-body eavesdropping.

Which isn't to say it's a complete drag, being dead. Ronan can possess people to see through their eyes, listen more clearly to their conversations and even rifle through their memories and tweak them to his liking. As he does, he'll start tying together clues until a solution to the case emerges from the threads. You're not just in this to solve your own murder, either: as you progress you'll also have the opportunity to investigate other people's crimes for experience and upgrades. So far, we've only seen the game's first crime scene, with Ronan's own body as a bloody centrepiece, but if less personal investigations don't make up the game's side-quest quota we'll eat O'Connor's timelessly fashionable trilby hat.

The other, more figurative dimension to *Murdered* is its combat – stealthy, ghost-on-ghost action that, in the tradition of games like *Dishonored*, forces you to think laterally and make use of O'Connor's new abilities to come out on top. See, you're not the only



ghost drifting around Salem's afterlife – glowing red demons also wander its streets and hallways, and O'Connor's straying onto their turf. Fighting them one-on-one isn't on the cards – they're much more capable than O'Connor in a straight fight. Instead, O'Connor has to pass through walls or use a Blink-like teleport move to outmanoeuvre these malevolent spirits. Once behind them, O'Connor can grimly exorcise them by slipping into their soulless husks and ripping them apart from the inside, just like your nice local priest might do.

Alternatively, O'Connor can use his powers to stealth past unaware enemies. For example, at a murder scene in a block of flats, we see O'Connor sneak past ghosts by possessing patrolling cops. You're not in control of the people you mind-jack in this way – it's more like you're hiding out in their bodies while they move, with O'Connor surreptitiously hitching along for the ride.

Mechanically, *Murdered* looks intriguing but there's still plenty we don't know about how its story will come together. Clearly, O'Connor's murder and the city of Salem have some mystical connection.

For example, in what might be the most brazen bit of plot crowbarring this year, O'Connor can't pass through the walls of buildings because the citizens of Salem have consecrated the foundations (and definitely not because the game still needs loading screens), implying that the living population of the city have at least some inkling that they're sharing their homes with the restless spirits of the dead. The Salem setting also can't be a coincidence, even though no-one on the dev team is talking witches just yet. It's only a matter of time though, surely?

Fortunately, unlike so many PS4 games we've previewed lately, *Murdered* and all its mysteries will be unveiled in just over a month when it launches in June. The blend of detective work and sneaky-sneaky investigative haunting might not be for everyone, but we'll give any game that takes the pressure off us to do the murdering a fair chance.

Rich Wordsworth

MURDERED: SOUL SUSPECT is being developed by Airtight Games. Check the website for more details: www.murdered.com

“YOU’RE NOT THE ONLY GHOST IN SALEM – GLOWING RED DEMONS ALSO WANDER ITS STREETS”



ΔOX□ The concept of the game is pretty cool – here’s hoping the actual detective work is more involved than *LA Noire*’s evidence contamination.

SPECTRAL INVESTIGATOR

The Salem PD’s guide to solving your own murder

- 1 Observe the body. Your corpse may conceal any number of clues, from the subtle (abrasions on the skin) to the less subtle (seven gunshot wounds to the chest).
- 2 Search the immediate area for clues. Look for anything that’s out of place: was this pile of broken glass always there? Or did it come from the window you fell through above?
- 3 Possess the police. They’ll have notebooks filled with observations and quiet conversations where they reveal they know more about your death than they’re letting on.
- 4 Plant false memories. Find a distraught witness being interviewed by a cop and force your own memories into theirs so that the police follow the right trail.

ΔOX□ Solving your own murder from beyond the grave would be a tricky enough task with creeps like this getting in the way all the time...



ETA SEPTEMBER | DEV TURTLE ROCK STUDIOS | PUB 2K GAMES | TWITTER @EVOLVEGAME

Evolve

There's something out there waiting for us...
and it ain't no man



IT'S EASY TO get bored of online shooters. Waves of pre-pubescent children, far better than you will ever be, sprinting around small maps and repeatedly shooting each other in the face with guns way more powerful than what you have. Sure, we are generalising (a lot) but FPS fatigue is a real issue in today's modern warfare-saturated gaming landscape.

Evolve feels like a breath of fresh air. From Turtle Rock, the guys who helped develop *Left 4 Dead*, comes a similarly asynchronous approach to multiplayer. *Evolve* is four-versus-one – an unbalanced match-up, you might think, but perhaps not. Four players control human squadmates, each a specific class that has a role to play within the larger group. The fifth player controls a monster that has to kill them. The monster starts off small, but by consuming local wildlife it can evolve (see?) and eventually become an enormous force of nature, steamrolling over the team of players that would initially hunt it down.

It's easy to see the parallels to *Left 4 Dead* but the asynchronous aspect of four-versus-one takes things even further, creating a tangible feeling of hunter against hunted. To begin with, the humans have the upper hand, with it in their best interests to seek out and kill the monster early on. If the big alien beastie can survive long enough to grow, the tables are abruptly turned and the match takes on an entirely new focus.

We interviewed producer Iain Willows at 2K, the game's new publisher after THQ folded. From the sounds of things, he is happy with how things turned out.

"*Evolve* really does appeal to that broad brush stroke of people. There are so many games these days where cooperative team gameplay is so important, and people are really going to get into that. With *Evolve* we are taking it to a different level. It's not just about taking a big gun and shooting someone, the real essence is... if you're the medic of this team, it's your job to keep everyone alive! It's kind of strange

to be confronted by this great big monster and not want to take a big gun to shoot at it, but at the same time it is really satisfying. It changes the dynamic of the battles.

"In the way that we are setting this up, it is four-versus-one. There are these unique classes of human hunters versus this one monster. The big sell is that this monster doesn't have to be AI controlled, it doesn't have to be scripted and won't do things in the way that you always expect – it is controlled by a player. The monster can change the game in anyway it wants to. You can start the game and stealth, staying out of the way and spending that whole evolution period not even engaging the Hunters – or you can rush in and engage them straight away. Really, we are trying to take the whole cooperative gameplay genre and – not turn it on its head – but take it up to another level. The real sell here is that we are putting those two genres together, the competitive and cooperative, and putting them into a monster game."





ΔOX□ Without your team to back you up, don't expect to last long against... this.



ΔOX□ Each of the four human characters has a specific class with a role to play in the larger team. Play it well, or everyone will suffer.

“WE WOULD LIKE TO THINK WE ARE GOING TO BE TRENDSETTERS FOR THE INDUSTRY”

Willows goes on to elaborate on how the game reached 2K. “*Evolve* started development in 2011, so we are a good three years down the line. When it landed on our plates – and thankfully it did because it is such a great concept – 2K has a great pedigree of making really good games, because we know what we are doing. Everybody on every level loves games and knows games, and we think we can contribute – but at the same time here we are working with Turtle Rock, who are the guys behind *Counter-Strike: Condition Zero* and *Left 4 Dead*, we don't need to tell them their shit. These guys know what they are doing. So, we let them do what they want, we don't interfere and they are going to make the best possible game that they can.”

The four human classes are Trapper, Support, Assault and Medic, and while their specific roles appear fairly straightforward, it's clear that each player needs to work

as a team to succeed. Each class seems to have some versatility, too, from a jetpack that allows easier movement to other unique toys.

“If you've got one guy who's the medic,” says Willows, “and starts off a game saying ‘Oh, I quite like the look of that over there, I'm going to go for a wander’ – well, now the team has no way to regenerate its health. Teamwork is so essential – the mobile arena, the tranquiliser gun, the harpoon gun are all very good, but if you haven't got the assault hunter with you dealing damage, you won't get far.”

“That balance is so essential to the classes and the way they fight the monster. It's going to be very familiar to people that have played *Left 4 Dead*, people who have played other co-op games, but I think *Evolve* offers something new that players will be intrigued by and will really enjoy. It's quite an experience. It's really satisfying knowing that you don't have a big gun to shoot at the monster, but



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- ▲ Four-versus-one multiplayer – haven't done that before, have you?
- Control four human classes or play as one giant monster.
- ✕ Made by the awesome team behind the *Left 4 Dead* games.
- Teamwork is utterly essential for human success to occur.

THE BIG QUESTION

2K producer Iain Willows talks resolution



So, the most important question of all – will *Evolve* on PS4 run at 1080p, 60fps?

"All I can say is that *Evolve* is still in development stage, there's not much I can say about that... so I'm not going to stake my claim on 'these are the figures we are shooting for'. We are going to achieve the best quality that we can, that's our aim. This is a 2K Games title, it's a next-gen title and it needs to be up there."

WHAT YOU'RE SAYING...

- monster hunter with ALIENS
@welshboymick
- relatively excited. So... yeah. There you have it. Enjoy my opinion.
@11hutty
- Evolve! Yeah! That game's gonna be rad!
@steveholt

△×× Next-gen only means beautiful graphics.

[you're] playing the support role. When you are made invisible by a teammate to get in and revive a player while the monster can't see you, or time an orbital strike to catch the monster, it all comes together."

The monster has three tiers of evolution, an interesting balance of power between the two sides – at first, in favour of the hunters, then relatively balanced and finally with the monster in the driving seat. Once at this most powerful stage, the monster doesn't necessarily have to kill the enemy team to win.

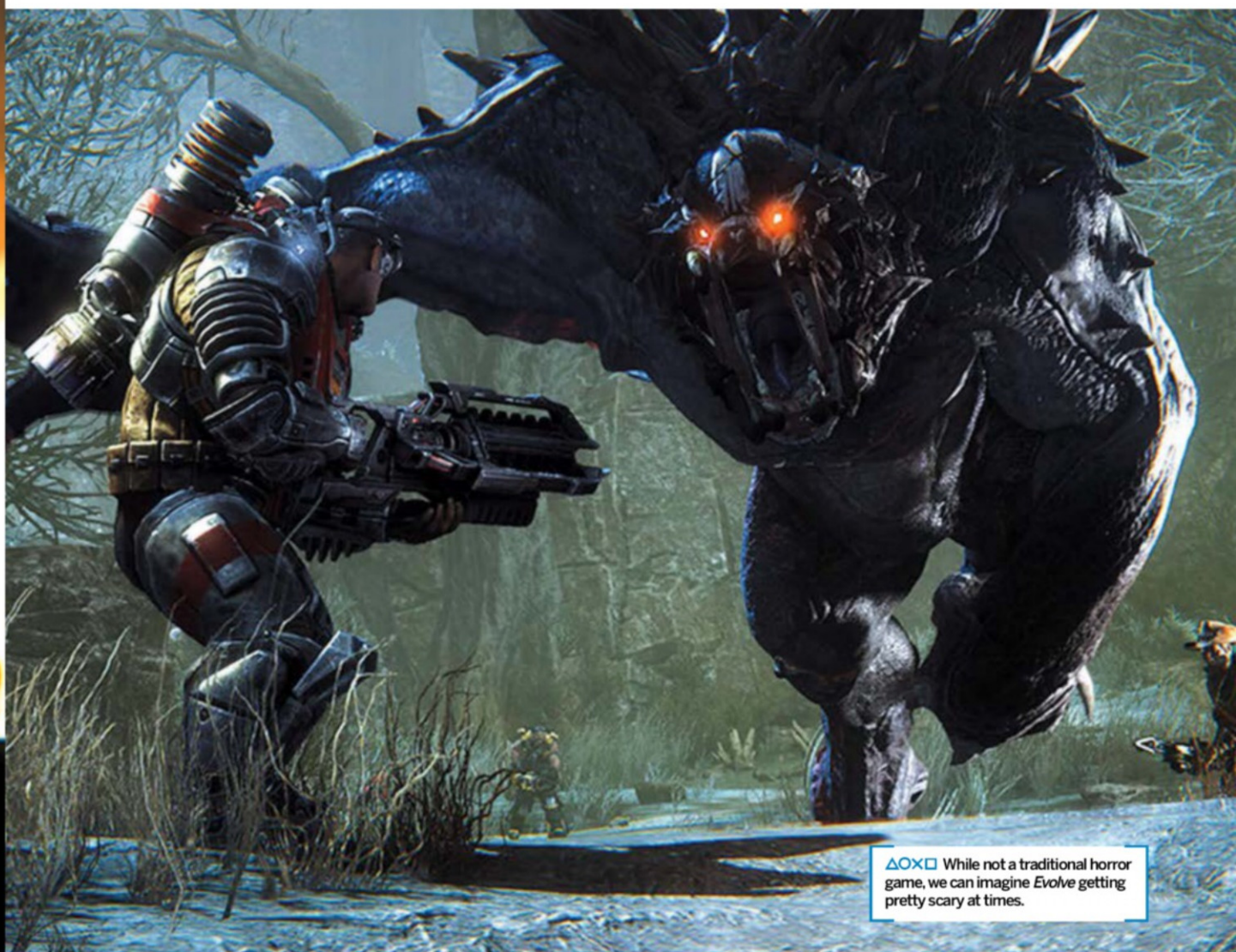
"Ultimately, you want to be in combat with the Hunters. Most players will get to stage three and think 'It's time to take on these Hunters, they've been bugging me all game, it's time to smash them up'. But what we want to do is give an endgame, give a point where players [controlling the monster] can go and say 'This needs to be over, I'm going to finish this... screw you guys!' This is just one example; on the forest ruins map, there is a generator that you can destroy as an option to end the game." Presumably, the humans will have similar win conditions that are separate of killing the monster – escaping the map, perhaps?

Willows is keen to stress that the mode we've seen so far, Hunt mode, is far from being the





△×□ This is Goliath, just one of many monsters you'll be able to choose from.



△×□ While not a traditional horror game, we can imagine *Evolve* getting pretty scary at times.

only way to play the game. "Am I allowed to talk about the other modes? Not in the slightest! You're getting a small window into *Evolve*. This is the core mode – the hunter becomes the hunted and the inversion of that. There will be different modes – I'm sure you as a gamer could think of a few different modes, and hopefully if you're thinking it, it'll be in it. There will be more modes, more maps, more monsters and more hunters."

"I'M SURE YOU AS A GAMER COULD THINK OF A FEW DIFFERENT MODES, AND HOPEFULLY IF YOU'RE THINKING IT, IT'LL BE IN IT"

Another reason to anticipate *Evolve* is the fact it's being developed exclusively for next-generation consoles (and PC, sure). According to Willows, the team at Turtle Rock is getting on well with developing for the PS4.

"I think developers are getting on with it. Across the board, and that's not just talking about Turtle Rock, one thing that's come across from developers is that it's a much more familiar place

to be. It's all PC architecture – they're consoles, but they are basically just PCs in a box. That's very familiar territory for these guys, so the feedback we are getting is that they are getting on much better with these new consoles.

"The reason *Evolve* is on next-gen consoles is because the visuals need to be stunning. The environments are so important to *Evolve* that we need those high quality visuals. We need

the vegetation to just look natural, for it to give atmosphere to the game. The wildlife and the plants – and those plants that eat you – we need them all to look good."

It's all sounding extremely positive, both familiar and different enough to be exciting yet easy to understand. Willows is hoping the game will set a brand new standard in the world of online shooters.

"We would like to think we are going to be trendsetters for the industry. That's a really great position to be in. There's enough room in the market for all these different types of games. For us to say we might be the first to take this concept and push it forward then we will see what happens... it's exciting. If ten years down the line people take inspiration from *Evolve* in the same way that we are taking inspiration from *Counter-Strike* and *Left 4 Dead* that would be fantastic."

Scheduled for some mysterious date between July and September this year, we doubt *Evolve* will knock *Call Of Duty* and *Battlefield* from their FPS thrones. More likely, this will appeal to the *Left 4 Dead* crowd, gamers that enjoy an experience more focused on tight teamwork and cooperation than teabagging someone while insulting their mother. We can't wait to feel the fear of being stalked through a forest by a creature far more powerful than us... and then, when we fancy a change, switch it up and play as the creature instead. Cue fire breath, stomping and plenty of evil laughter, which all sounds good to us.

Sam Smith

EVOLVE is being nurtured by Turtle Rock Studios. Hunt down the website for more details: evolvegame.com

ETA 27 MAY | DEV UBISOFT MONTREAL | PUB UBISOFT | TWITTER @WATCHDOGSGAME

Watch Dogs

Next-gen's poster child is finally back on track



ALSO COMING
TO PS3

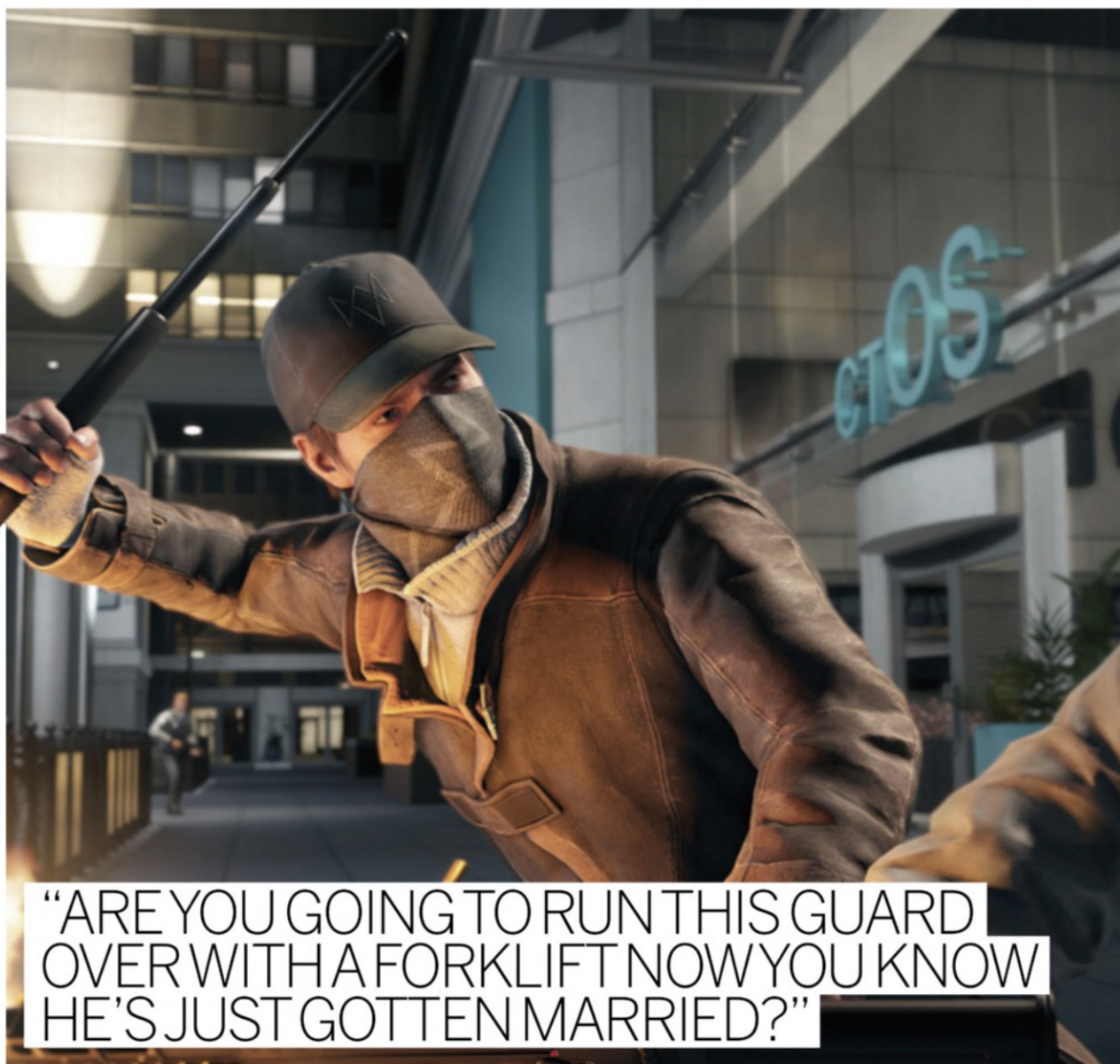
WHEN DID WE start being able to use words like 'zeitgeist' to talk about games? It's surely a recent development. 15 years ago, no-one would have claimed that *Ape Escape* reflected the spirit of the times, and *Crash Bandicoot* was just a rodent who liked running, not the voice of a generation.

But here we have *Watch Dogs*, a game that couldn't be more zeitgeist-y if you downloaded it from Wikileaks or had to catch copies as they were flung from the balcony of the Ecuadorian embassy. After six years in development, its themes of cyber-security and surveillance have gone from the tertiary concerns of paranoid message board users to global hot-button issues. It was the ideal game to launch the new console generation. And then it didn't.

You know the idea of *Watch Dogs* by now. Ace hacker Aiden Pearce is out on the streets of a near-future Chicago making a solo stand against the city's networks of criminals and crooked cops. They've got the numbers, but Aiden's got a smartphone that enables him to hack into the city's computer-controlled security and surveillance network, letting him raise bridges, hack cameras and remote-pilot automated forklift trucks into the surprised faces of patrolling guards. You know this because it was all shown in the trailers that appeared in the run-up to the game's original launch date back in November last year. So why the six month delay? What new tricks has 2014's *Watch Dogs* learned compared to last year's version?

The same ones, basically, only moreso. The delay granted to the Ubisoft Montreal team wasn't done to add more features, but to polish existing ones. According to creative director Jonathan Morin, there was nothing about the game that was broken, exactly – just lots of smaller bugs in the massively-connected world that needed stamping out before the team was happy with it.

Take the forklift truck example above. As everyone knows, the key to murdering someone with a hacked piece of construction machinery is anonymity – you want people bemoaning an industrial accident, not scouring the streets looking for a man with a jailbroken JCB piloting app. Unfortunately, in the earlier builds, this sort of hack

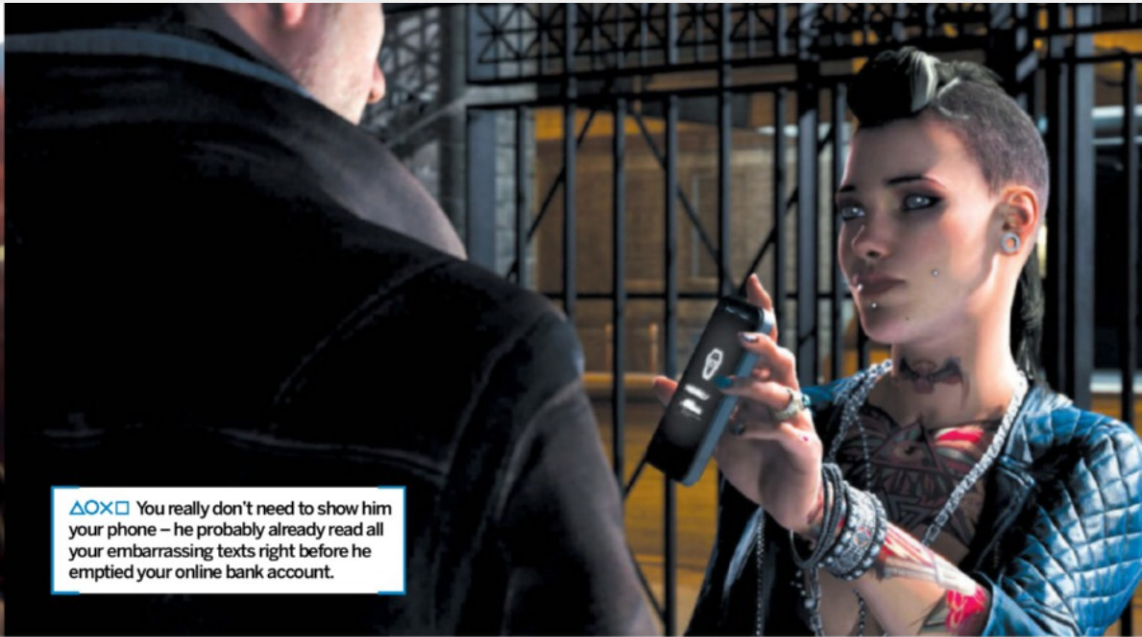


had the irksome tendency to psychically draw your enemies to Aiden's position, however well hidden he happened to be. You might plan the perfect chain reaction of interconnecting systems, only to have it devolve into a humdrum firefight after hitting 'run'.

The citizens of Chicago have also been given some extra depth, in keeping with the game's aspiration to make hacking for profit more of an ethical head-scratcher. As you wander the streets, you can scan passersby with your Profiler, which throws up details about their personal lives squirreled away from their private data. Are you going to empty this woman's bank account now that you know she's a single mother making

minimum wage? Are you going run this security guard over with a forklift now you know he's just gotten married?

Watch Dogs has two deceptively complex challenges to overcome to make good on its promise: to create a believably connected future city that can withstand players' attempts to exploit it, and to tell a story that puts adult themes front and centre. So far, we've seen a lot of the former – *Watch Dogs* is selling Chicago as a hyper-modern hacker's playground. But the latter has only really made its appearance on the periphery of these sandbox trailers – a glimpse of Aiden's niece's grave, a panning shot inside a high-tech sex slave operation



△OX□ You really don't need to show him your phone – he probably already read all your embarrassing texts right before he emptied your online bank account.



△OX□ For a game so focused on technology, seeing the hero wave a big stick around seems oddly barbaric. Just send the guy a nasty tweet or something...



SECOND SCREEN A city in the palm of your hand

CHALLENGE

You can find other players on the map of Chicago. Tapping on their respective icons challenges them to race you for objectives.

CHOPPER

This helicopter is under your direct control. You can stick it on your opponent's location by dragging the icon with your finger.

COPS

You can also direct Chicago Police Department ground units to cut your opponent off at street level and set up road blocks.

CARS

Why not just hack the city's traffic infrastructure and cause a massive pile-up? What do you mean, "because it's wrong"? You're no fun.



and so on. These are themes that need to be explored carefully to avoid simply painting the villains as two-dimensional bad guys, and by the same token, Aiden as the two-dimensional hero out to stop them. A six-month delay is annoying, especially for a game being touted as the best reason to get a PS4 on launch day. But Ubisoft had faith enough in *Watch Dogs*' potential to invest the extra time and that, in a way, a most encouraging sign.

Rich Wordsworth

WATCH DOGS is being developed by Ubisoft Montreal. Check the website for more details: watchdogs.ubi.com

I'VE GOT THE POWER

Noctis not only has fabulous hair and a grumpy scowl but also mysterious powers. Noctis can control swords through teleportation, and doing so changes his eye colour from blue to red to make him look even more emo. Noctis has also been able to predict the deaths of others since an accident as a child.

THE FRESH PRINCE OF LUCIS

Noctis is the son of the King of the Mafia-like royal family of Lucis, a technologically advanced nation surrounded by countries with medieval tech. The reason for this divide is a cold war over powerful crystals, the last of which Noctis's family protects. As other countries lost their crystals, their societies degraded.

CRYSTAL CHRONICLES

Just as the cold war seems to be coming to an end with the signing of a peace treaty, the nation of Niflheim invades Lucis, capturing the last remaining crystal and forcing Noctis and his friends to escape. Considering it's his family's job to protect the crystals, it is up to Noctis to get it back before the Niflheim forces can leave the city.

LADS ON TOUR

Noctis has a bunch of pals to help him in his struggles. Our favourite is Gladiolus, a strong melee fighter that grew up like a brother to Noctis and sports a massive bastard sword. Level-headed Ignis was raised as a military tactician from an early age and wields a katana, while womaniser Prompto sports a rifle, feeling inferior to his friends due to coming from a family of low birth.

ANATOMY OF... NOCTIS

A new console means a new Final Fantasy, and that means a new main character. Enter Noctis, our new hero. Does he have the fashion sense and ridiculous hair to fill the role?

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Final Fantasy XV



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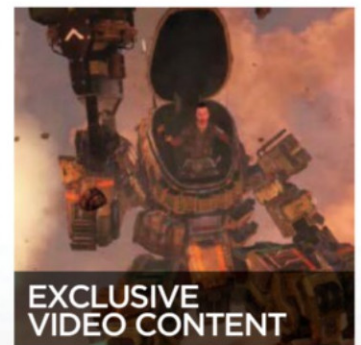
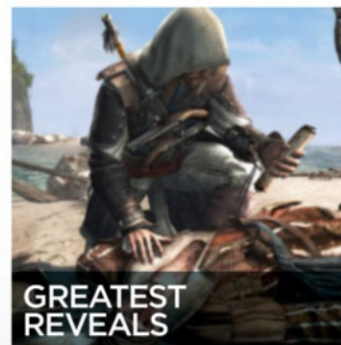
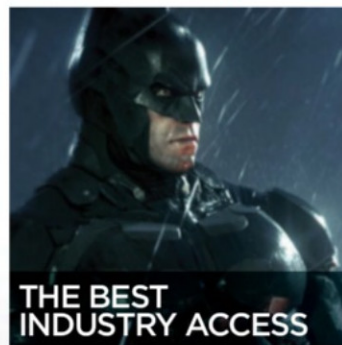
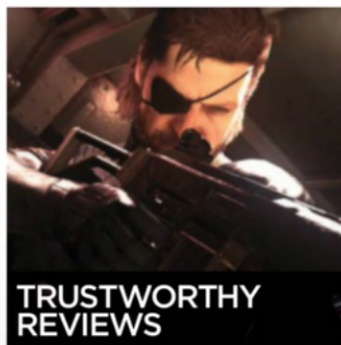
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Transformers: Rise Of The Dark Spark

The metal will live on



TRANSFORMERS FANS ARE an interesting bunch, obsessed with the canon and plot of a series invented solely to sell toys to children. What helps is that the toys in question are robots that turn into cars, which is awesome. Still, the devotion that *Transformers* elicits from some is extreme, and as such *Rise Of The Dark Spark* may garner what seems to many as an unnecessary amount of attention.

Thing is, the last two *Transformers* games were actually pretty good, High Moon Studios taking its own spin on the franchise and creating a couple of decent third-person shooters. The third entry in the series has a new developer in Edge Of Reality, a studio that hasn't exactly produced a ton of hits. With most of its experience in porting titles from other developers to different consoles, it will be interesting to see if Edge Of Reality can step up and follow High Moon's solid example.

The first two games set up a new retelling of the initial *Transformers* back-story, detailing the history of Cybertron and how the Autobots and Decepticons

first came to blows. In an interesting twist, the game will serve both as a continuation of that story, but also tie into the film series and the newest movie, *Age Of Extinction*. As you might have guessed if you've seen any of the films, fans aren't happy about this – one of the biggest appeals of the games so far has been a look and tone based mainly on the original cartoon and toys. People hate the new films, and for good reason (they are, after all, awful) so to shoehorn in a bunch of movie characters into a series that many would argue doesn't need them could be a mistake. Plus, the designs of the robots in the movies are *rubbish*, just jumbled messes of random metal. Did we mention we don't like the films?

Gameplay seems to be the same balance of third-person shooting and vehicular stuff that the last two titles carved out. *Rise Of The Dark Spark* will let players ally with either the Autobots (good guys) or Decepticons (evildoers) to protect or destroy Earth, resulting in two wildly different campaigns. The game will feature over 40 playable characters, although it isn't clear whether this includes the two versions of

each that will inevitably come from including the film canon. Each character in the campaign will have a unique ability, so it is likely that stages will be designed to showcase the powers of set characters.

There's nothing more to go on at the moment, but the change in developer and addition of crappy movie robots makes us worry. The last two *Transformers* games were good but not great, intended for serious fans who appreciate the references and characters. By using a bunch of movie stuff and pissing them off in the process, Activision may have alienated the only real audience for the new game.

That said, maybe there is some mileage in this idea. The idea of classic Optimus Prime repeatedly stamping on the face of movie Optimus Prime is an appealing one. Battle of the franchises! Hell, get the *Beast Wars* lot in there too and let's have a free-for-all.

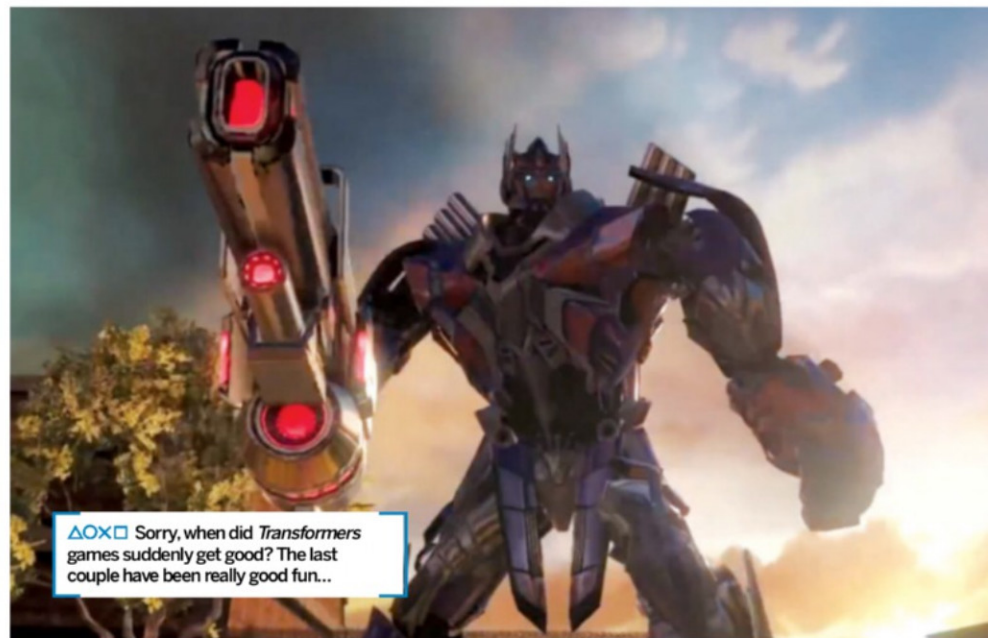
Sam Smith

TRANSFORMERS: RISE OF THE DARK SPARK is being activated by Edge Of Reality. Visit the website for more details: www.transformersgame.com



PRIOR FORM

● **Mass Effect** The last thing Edge Of Reality did was the *Mass Effect* port on PS3, which was... alright? It hasn't made that many original games.



△○×□ Sorry, when did *Transformers* games suddenly get good? The last couple have been really good fun...



△○×□ What's not to like about playing as a giant robotic dinosaur that can breathe fire? Hopefully Grimlock's dino form won't be a 'rage' mechanic this time.

"THE CHANGE IN DEVELOPER AND ADDITION OF CRAPPY MOVIE ROBOTS MAKES US WORRY"

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?



Two different franchises to pillage for twice as many Transformers.



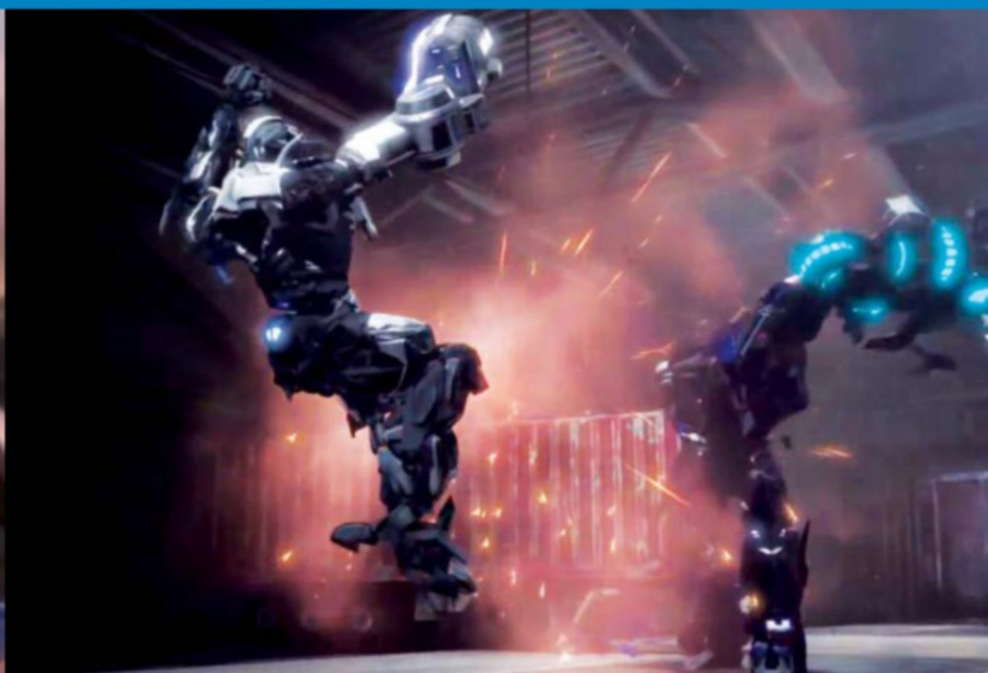
Play as over 40 of the classic bots. Although, we all know that Megatron is the way to go.



Create your own Transformer in fun competitive multiplayer.



Dinobots!



PREVIEW

HOTLINE MIAMI 2

PS4

LO-FIOLENCE

If you haven't played the original *Hotline Miami* yet, you are missing out. One of the PC's best games turned out to work just as well on consoles, as well as being a perfect fit for the Vita. A top-down shooter set in a neon-soaked wonderland, it managed to convey a sense of violence with rudimentary graphics thanks to amazing art direction.

WELCOME TO MIAMI

The success of the first game led to the development of a sequel. Gameplay seems to be much the same: work your way through stages full of enemies where one hit will kill both them and you. Getting killed often and restarting until you refine your strategy creates an addictive gameplay loop that nails the 'one more go' feeling.

STORY TIME

The first game had a story, albeit one not explicitly told to the player: a tripped-out tale of murder, delusions and sweet bikes that asked thought-provoking questions about the nature of violent games and why exactly nasty people like us enjoy them. The sequel is set both before and after the events of the first game.

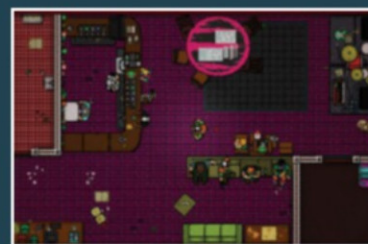
PIG-HEADED

From the sounds of things, players will take control of several characters over the story. We've only seen two of these scenarios so far. The first is 'The Pig Butcher', with players apparently taking part in a bloody massacre before it is revealed the stage is a movie set for a film inspired by Jacket's initial rampages. It's another interesting critique on the place of violence in society.

HOW META OF YOU

The second preview stage features 'The Fans', a group inspired to become masked vigilantes themselves, once again thanks to the main character Jacket's past murders. The Fans go around killing random thugs, hoping to receive media attention and the same phone calls that spurred the character into action.

ARE WE SICK IN THE HEAD?



Hotline Miami poses some interesting questions about the role of violence in videogames and media. The game will frequently appear to address the player directly through the protagonist, asking them why they are doing these horrible things and if they truly enjoy it.



Even if you unlock the secret ending to the first game that gives you the reason behind the story, it quickly passes it off as unnecessary, with contrived explanations that don't really justify what you've already done.



The reason the game can afford to ask these questions is the fact that it is incredibly fun. If the violence was boring then no, we wouldn't enjoy it. But the colourful, pulsing ultraviolence of *Hotline Miami* is so compelling.



So what's the deal – are we sick? We don't know. While the game might seem a bit preachy in the way it conveys its message, it ultimately draws no conclusions and makes no judgements. After all, this game is exactly the thing that it attempts to deconstruct. It burns the stick at both ends, in the sense that *Hotline Miami* is still a great game if you remove all social commentary and simply enjoy the gory action.

Hopefully the sequel will continue to ask similar questions, making us think even as we cave in some random dude's skull with a crowbar. Honestly, as long as the music is still rad, we don't care either way.

Instant Expert

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Hotline Miami 2

PS4

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PREVIEW ROUND-UP



Some games came out ages ago, others are about to be released and some are miles off. Here, you'll find a selection of games from the latter two categories, but which will be next to join your collection?

PS3



DYNASTY WARRIORS: GUNDAM REBORN

KNOWN AS SHIN *Gundam Musou* in Japan, this is the fourth entry in the *Dynasty Warriors Gundam* franchise: a series we are quite fond of, being huge fans of both franchises. The cool cel-shaded graphics of *DW:G3* are nowhere to be seen, unfortunately, but otherwise this seems to be more of the same. If you like the idea of controlling a giant robot and cutting your way through literally thousands of other giant robots, this is the game for you.

RELEASE DATE: Q2 2014

PS4

PS3



MAD MAX

YOU MIGHT THINK the time has passed for a *Mad Max* game, considering that a vast number of gamers today won't even have been born when the films were first released. Still, the series still has a huge fanbase, and its influence can't be understated. There would be no *Fallout* without

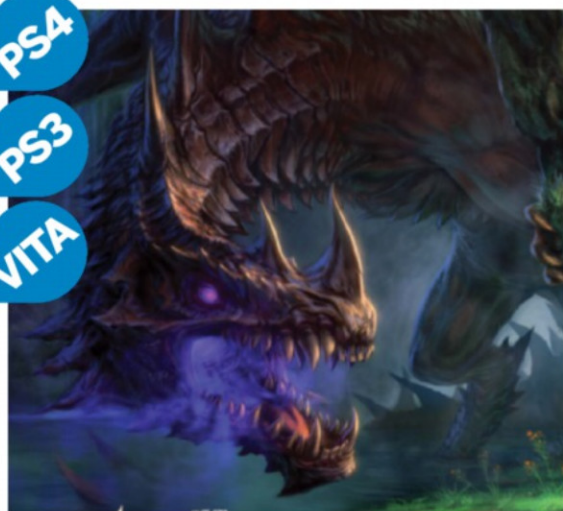
Mad Max, for example. Set in an open, barren wasteland, players control Max (not Mel Gibson – decide for yourself whether that's good or bad) as they drive around and take out crusty motorpunks. Still not interested? It's by the *Just Cause* team. Yeah, we thought that'd do the trick.

RELEASE DATE: Q4 2014

PS4

PS3

VITA



DRAGON FIN SOUP

A TOP-DOWN roguelike RPG with graphics inspired by the Super Nintendo? You have our attention, *Dragon Fin Soup*. The game will have two modes: a standard story mode and a survival mode with permadeath. Movement and combat are turn based (yay!) with players controlling Red Robin (no, not Tim Drake), an alcoholic mercenary that seems to be a reimagining of Little Red Riding Hood. Players can fish, mine, cook, craft and tame pets to accompany them and more. This one could be good.

RELEASE DATE: 2015

PS3



ENEMY FRONT

HAVE WE BEEN away from World War Two long enough now that returning to the setting actually feels fresh? In today's deluge of modern warfare shooters, going back to 1944 actually seems original. Developed by City Interactive, a Polish studio known for pumping out mediocre titles like *Sniper: Ghost Warrior*, you'll control American war correspondent Robert Hawkins as he fights alongside the resistance movements in France, Norway, Poland and more.

RELEASE DATE: Q2 2014

VITA



FLAME OVER

THERE AREN'T ENOUGH firefighting games these days, especially compared to the PSone glory era of *Rosco McQueen* et al. *Flame Over* seeks to change that, a roguelike action game about the ancient art of spraying water on fires. Sporting more than just an excellent name, *Flame Over* features random levels and a complex fire simulation system. Your mission is a guide a firefighter through 16 floors of blazing office blocks, seeking out loot and power-ups while taking down that pesky heat energy.

RELEASE DATE: Q4 2014

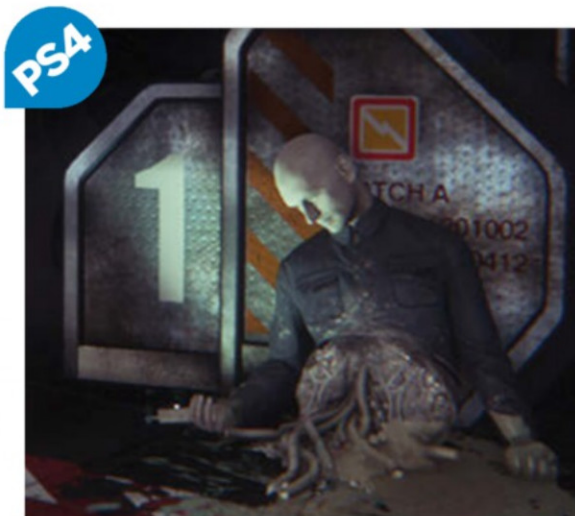


PS3
VITA

SACRED 3

SACRED 2 WAS an enjoyable but unremarkable action-RPG, most memorable for featuring heavy involvement from power metal champions Blind Guardian – you could even go to a gig in the game! Former developer Ascaron has ceased to be, and with new dev Keen Games comes a lack of cheesy German metal we find somewhat... disturbing. Still, music aside, *Sacred 3* seems a worthy follow-up. Based around four-player co-op, solo players will be joined by three AI companions instead.

RELEASE DATE: 22 AUGUST



PS4

ALIEN: ISOLATION

WE NOW HAVE a date for *Alien: Isolation*, the *Alien* game we've always wanted. After the nightmare of *Colonial Marines* our hopes were low, but trust a studio like The Creative Assembly (*Total War*, among others) to really understand what makes the series good and what people want out of it. A first-person survival-horror with minimal combat, *Isolation* will emphasise escaping and hiding from the alien rather than facing it head-on, and initial reports are extremely promising.

RELEASE DATE: 7 OCTOBER

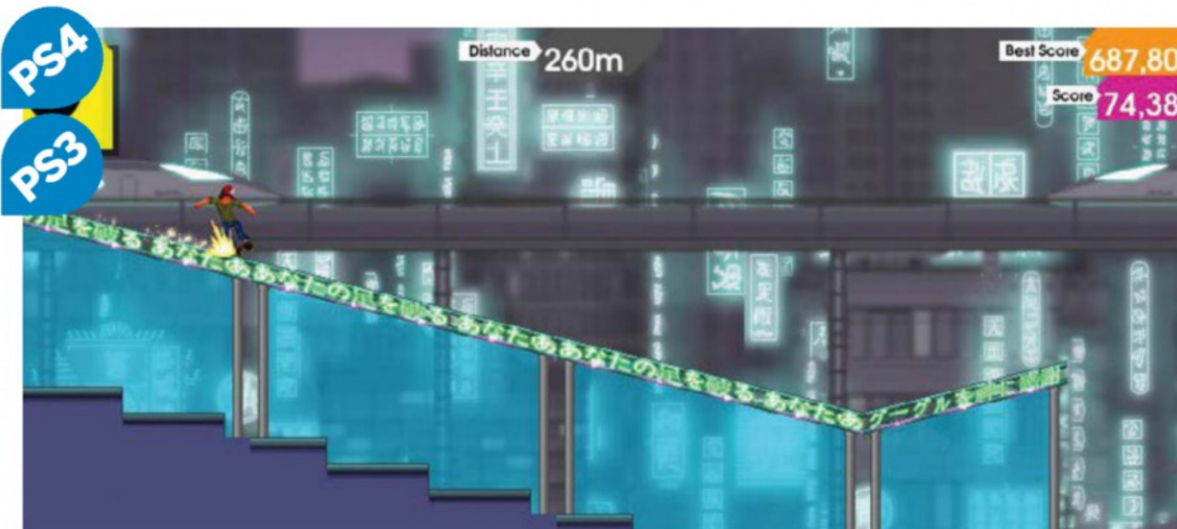


PS4
PS3

BOUND BY FLAME

CAN'T WAIT UNTIL *Dragon Age: Inquisition* and don't fancy *The Elder Scrolls Online*? *Bound By Flame* might be your next best bet. Sure, this is a studio responsible for such 'hits' as *Mars: War Logs* and *Of Orcs And Men*, but sometimes you fancy a good C-tier game while you wait for the triple-A stuff. You'll control a hero possessed by a demonic force, and can level up your powers to either use or reject this influence. The whole thing looks very 'fantasy-RPG by numbers' but hey, it's almost summer.

RELEASE DATE: 9 MAY



PS4
PS3

OLLIOLLI

ONE OF THE best games on Vita is coming to console, and we couldn't be happier. A two-dimensional skateboard sim with endless runner elements and a hint of rhythm action, *OlliOlli* is simple, addictive arcade fun. The game will benefit from the larger, more precise sticks a controller allows, as the small Vita sticks are sometimes cause for frustration with the current version. Similar to the recent *Luftrausers*, there isn't a huge amount to *OlliOlli*, but what is there is just so fun and easy to pick

RELEASE DATE: Q2 2014

up and play. It's the perfect 'doss around for an hour' game, basically, and there are few recent games better at tricking you into thinking it might actually be possible to go back for just one more go. You'll notice a friend has beaten a high score or dream up some amazing new line and next thing you know, it'll be dark, you'll be hungry and you *still* won't have topped the leaderboards. With daily challenges in addition to the wealth of maps and tasks in the main game, this is exactly the kind of sickness we are down with.



PS3
VITA

HATSUNE MIKU PROJECT DIVA F 2ND

THE FIRST ONE only just came out here but already Sega has confirmed that the second *Project Diva f* game will be coming to Europe. If you've yet to play the first, the series is basically a rhythm-action game fronted by virtual pop star Hatsune Miku, full of saccharine J-pop and plenty of posing. Similar games have fallen out of favour over the last decade, so Hatsune Miku and her friends are a relief for fans of pressing buttons in time to music.

RELEASE DATE: Q3 2014

ENTER THE MATRIX

VIRTUAL REALITY IS COMING TO PS4 WITH SONY'S NEW MORPHEUS HEADSET, BUT WHAT IS VR AND WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? READ ON...





WHAT IS VR?

■ **VR STANDS FOR** virtual reality, a computer-simulated environment that can simulate physical presence in a virtual world. Sure, we've seen the term thrown about loads over the years – the Eighties in particular had a swathe of VR toys that were little more than screens you wore on your face. Time marches on, and our current level of technology is making VR more and more possible.



△○×□ *Datura*, a mysterious adventure game, was one of the demos available on the Morpheus at GDC.



△○×□ *Thief* was also available. VR aims to make such first-person games even more immersive.



WHAT'S THIS ABOUT A RIFT?

■ **YOU MAY HAVE** heard of the Oculus Rift, the most well known VR gaming headset around (at least, for now). Funded by a Kickstarter campaign a few years ago, the Rift is still in ongoing development but has been available to try and buy frequently since inception. It's been mainly centred around PC games, but obviously console manufacturers have been playing close attention.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

■ **BECAUSE THE GAMING** powers that be have decided that VR is the next big thing. Initially, we passed it off as a fad like 3D films (we bloody *hate* 3D films) but VR seems to be sticking around, and Sony throwing its hat in the ring is a big sign that this might be something to take seriously. Perhaps the tech is finally ready and VR is actually here to stay this time?



TAKE THE RED PILL

■ **SO ENTER THE** Morpheus: Sony's entry into the VR battlefield. Announced at GDC, the event was hosted by SCE Worldwide Studios boss Shuhei Yoshida and included discussions on prior innovations by Sony such as 3D graphics, CD-ROM tech and Remote Play. That Sony would mention VR in the same breath makes it clear that it aims for this to be a big deal. Whether this is a reaction from Sony to the success of the Oculus Rift is up to discussion, but it seems to us like something it has had planned for quite some time. It's certainly one way to one-up Kinect!



WHAT DOES IT ACTUALLY DO?

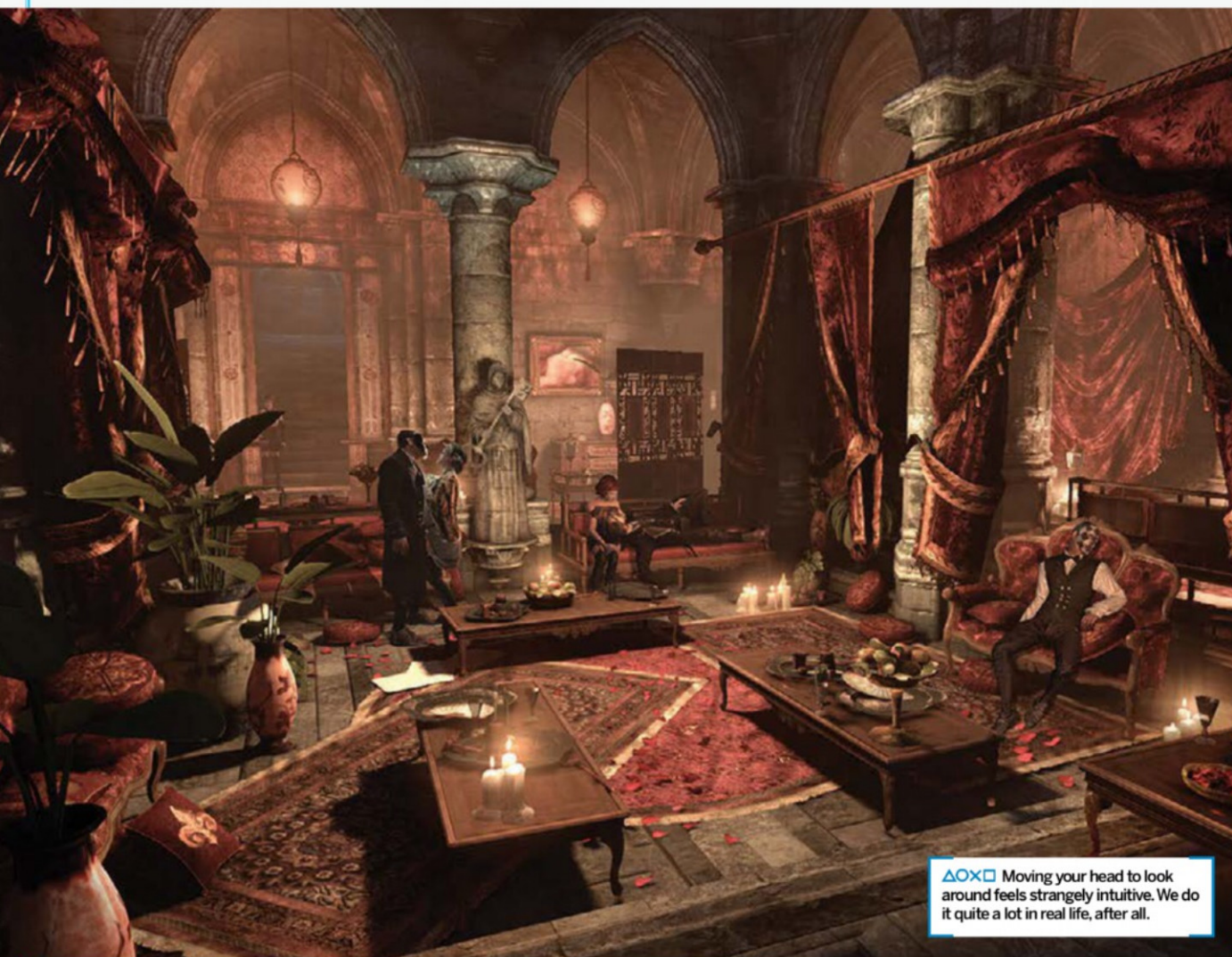
■ **FROM THE SOUNDS** of things, much the same as the Oculus Rift. At a very basic level, the Morpheus is a set of screens and speakers that you wear on your face. It sounds like Nintendo's ill-fated Virtual Boy, yes, but the thing with VR is you simply need to experience it for yourself to understand it. We can explain it until we are blue in the face, but you'll never believe us until you've given it a go. It's easy to be cynical and dismiss the technology, but in our experience, most people who have tried it become extremely interested and excited in what the tech can do. We imagine Sony will want to get Morpheus on as many heads as possible before launch, so try it out!

WHAT DOES SHU HAVE TO SAY?

■ **"AT SCE WE** view innovation as an opportunity to build on our mission to push the boundaries of play. Project Morpheus is the latest example of innovation from SCE, and we're looking forward to its continued development and the games that will be created as development kits get into the hands of content creators."

DANCE, MY PUPPETS

■ **THANKS TO ITS** use of the PS Camera and PS Move-like trackers, the Morpheus can tell when you lean and bend over, move your head and body, and even turn your back to the camera, something that confuses the Oculus Rift. Don't worry if you hate motion control – we imagine many games using the headset will still control with a traditional pad. This isn't a Kinect that you wear on your face, and just because it can track your movements doesn't mean that's all it does. Most games will still be played as normal – sitting on the couch with a controller in hand – the only difference being the screens and speakers are now *on your face*.



△○×□ Moving your head to look around feels strangely intuitive. We do it quite a lot in real life, after all.

MORE WORDS FROM SHU!

■ **"VIRTUAL REALITY IS** the next innovation from SCE that we believe will shape the future of games. I have long dreamed about VR and the possibilities it brings in regards to game development. This new technology will deliver a sense of presence, where you as the player actually feel like you're inside the game and your emotions feel that much more real." Obviously it's in the best interests of the head of Sony Computer Entertainment to try and sell us on the potential of VR, but if the tech really can live up to Shu's hype, Sony is certainly going to have a winner on its hands.





A BRIEF HISTORY OF VR (IN GAMES)



While virtual reality is the new big thing in gaming, it's hardly the first time we've ever heard the term. Videogames have had plenty of run-ins with VR, or things claiming to offer VR, in the past.



The most famous (or infamous) is probably the Nintendo Virtual Boy. Marketed as a successor to the Game Boy, the console featured a large headset that output horrific faux-3D graphics in varying shades of red. A lack of games combined with the fact that the thing was freaking *horrible* to play led to awful sales, and the console never even made it to Europe.

Around the same time was the Tiger R-Zone, a rubbish knock-off of the Virtual Boy – that's right, the terrible Virtual Boy had even worse pretenders. The R-Zone featured a similar headset setup, but even worse graphics based on primitive LCD technology. With no option to save or adjust volume and a library of terrible games which were all extremely similar, it did even worse than Nintendo's VR faceplant.



Recently we've seen a trend of 'augmented reality' games, placing virtual elements over footage of the real world. You might know *The Eye Of Judgment* on PS3, although you probably won't have played it as it required a PS Eye and real-world cards. The *Invizimals* games on PSP and Vita also toyed with this idea, catching virtual monsters from real-world environments.

Lots of games and consoles have claimed to offer VR, but the truth is none of them have. A headset with two screens in offering crappy parallax 3D isn't virtual reality, and neither is overlaying game assets on a feed of real life. None of us have truly experienced virtual reality in gaming. At least, not yet...

TECH SPECS

■ **THE CURRENT PROTOTYPE** for Project Morpheus features a head-mounted display with 1080p resolution and a 90-degree field of view. Accelerometer and gyroscope sensors built into the head mounted unit as well as the PlayStation Camera accurately track head orientation and movement, so as your head rotates, the image of the virtual world rotates intuitively in real-time. Project Morpheus also

features new 3D audio technology that re-creates stereoscopic sounds in all directions and changes in real-time depending on your head orientation. In addition to PlayStation Camera, Project Morpheus works with the DualShock 4 and PS Move for several control options. What does this all mean? Basically, the whole kit is extremely powerful and capable of creating graphics just as beautiful as a huge HDTV.

COMPONENT	Processor unit, head-mounted unit
DISPLAY METHOD	LCD
PANEL SIZE	5 inches
PANEL RESOLUTION	1920×RGB×1080 (960×RGB×1080 per eye)
FIELD OF VIEW	90 degrees
SENSORS	Accelerometer, Gyroscope
CONNECTION INTERFACE	HDMI + USB
FUNCTION	3D audio, Social Screen



EVEN THE OCULUS GUYS LIKE IT

■ **OCULUS VR CO-FOUNDER**, Nate Mitchell:

"We're super excited to have more companies in this space. More developers and more companies investing in virtual reality means more resources put towards games. I think the audience is going to get into VR faster, which means more people to sell to."

"Because that's really been the catch 22 for developers. There are developers who want to make games in VR, but it's hard to get sign off from their executives because it's impossible to get the ROI right now. Who are you going to sell to? 50,000 Oculus developers? So with Sony getting in the mix, it really does mean there's going to be a bigger audience, there's going to be more people that can buy games."

"Sony, I'm sure – I hope – is going to start funding development, and hopefully some of that comes to the PC side. Even if they stick to PlayStation and we stay on PC, there is no doubt we'll have more people using VR than ever before in the history of virtual reality, so we're pretty excited about the whole thing."

Nice to see that even a rival company can play nice, although this quote is from before it was bought by Facebook. We imagine the Oculus message just got a whole lot more corporate.

BUT UBISOFT ISN'T SOLD

■ **SPEAKING AT A** round table session at GDC, Ubisoft's Lionel Raynaud, had this to say about the headset: "VR would need to sell at least 1 million units to be viable for development." Seems not everyone is smitten. After debacles like the Wii U, it's understandable that developers and publishers will want to wait and see whether it can make them money, but this approach might be self-fulfilling: if the Morpheus has no games, no-one will buy one.

SO, WHEN'S IT OUT?

■ **NO IDEA**, BUT it's going to be a while. If you have the chance in the meantime, try out the Oculus Rift and really understand what VR is about. Once you truly understand what the Morpheus will be able to do, you'll understand why people are so excited about it. The potential here is enormous – this could truly change the way we play games forever. Sure, we are probably exaggerating a bit, but this is such an exciting proposition that we can't help ourselves.



PS4 EVOLUTION

How your favourite games are better on PS4

A new generation is a chance for developers to up their game and give 110 per cent. But what changes are in store on PS4?

Gaming is almost unrecognisable from its nascent years in the early Eighties, but a few genres have been there for the ride, refusing to even suffer a dip in popularity or a few moments out of the spotlight. Sports, clearly, is one of those. It's gaming's perfect partner, really – the other side of people's fascination and dedication to play, and a wonderful starting point for developers still trying to figure out how to make all those 1s and 0s turn into something playable.

And so the obsession with videogame sports began, with *Madden NFL* and *NHL 94* achieving mainstream success (think Vince Vaughan in *Swingers* or Jason Lee in *Mallrats*) and the likes of *Tecmo Bowl* and Dino Dini's famously near-unplayable *Kick Off* appearing even earlier. It's shifted in tone and emphasis over the years, from the simplicity of the 16-bit era to the attitude-heavy *Street/Blitz/Jam* world of the early 21st Century through to the rampant realism of today's games, but one thing has always remained – gamers love digital sports.

So, with the PS4 nearing its six-month birthday and already playing host to some killer (and not-so-killer) sports games, what have we learned from this latest generational shift?

What have sports games become? And where are they going?

The easiest answer? Graphics. Lots and lots of beautiful, shiny graphics. 1080p and 60fps, those magical numbers that mean both nothing and

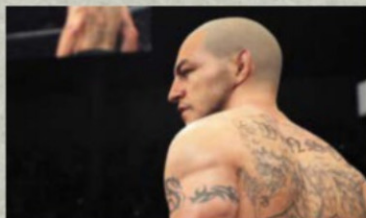


5 THINGS EVERY SPORTS GAME NEEDS



AUTHENTICITY

Sports fans crave reality; they want *FIFA*, not *Mario Super Strikers*. By securing licences, player likenesses, commentary teams and even TV broadcast parity, a developer is playing with a full deck.



DRAMA

The secret essence of sport itself is drama. This is a story unfolding in real time – a multi-faceted tale of human endeavour and skill. The best sports games tell us stories with their engines.



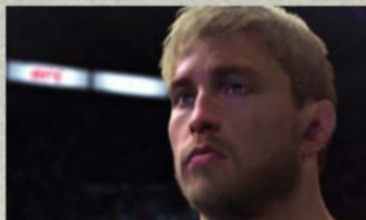
MULTIPLAYER

Long ago, all you needed was one-on-one, but then the demand grew and now you can play 22-a-side online matches on *FIFA*. Sports are meant to be played together, and so are sports games.



SPIRIT

PES has never had the budget of *FIFA*, but it has always understood the allure of football – the individual bit of skill, the wonder goal. The best games make you feel like you're right there with your team.



OPTIONS

If there's one thing that sports games do well, it's lots of things. From scenario modes to skill challenges, great sports games let you enjoy them in more ways than almost any other genre.



"IGNITE PROMISES UNPRECEDENTED LEVELS OF FIDELITY"

everything at the same time. The ripple in Peter Crouch's shirt. The sweat on LeBron James's head. The glowing lights that glare across the court or illuminate the pitch. The amazing, flawless likeness of Leo Messi... until he opens his mouth and his teeth look like chalk cubes. The graphics. They're amazing.

There's no mistaking the PS4's significant leaps in this area over games in the previous generation. Sports have become a great benchmark for graphics tech in recent years because everything is so instantly familiar – we know what Old Trafford looks like, how shiny a hockey rink should be, why Ibrahimovic's ponytail counter-balances his epic nose. So when we see those same things recreated to an ever-improving level, it's easy to feel impressed.

Just look at footage of *NBA 2K14* in motion on PS4, or the new images of *MLB 14: The Show*. It's not quite real, but damn, it's not far off. It helps, of course, that these are games within established and well-respected franchises, so players come ready with an expectancy of quality. In other words – you know these games are good anyway, so the graphical boost is a very pleasant bonus.

Obviously, it's not polygon counts and normal-mapped self-shadows that are going to take sports gaming to the next-level or make these existing games feel next-gen. What they need are new engines, which is exactly what they're getting. A new engine requires a greater eye for detail than a simple graphical flourish, and as such it needs to prove itself quickly if it's going to get gamers' attentions.

The most prominent new engine in sports gaming comes, predictably, from EA. It's called Ignite, and it promises unprecedented levels of visual fidelity, physics calculations, and in-game player interactivity. It's already powering a few games, namely *FIFA 14*, *Madden 25* and *NBA Live 14*, but the wild inconsistency in quality across those titles means that it's hard to judge exactly what Ignite means.

In fact, its most impressive implementation is in a game that is not yet on shelves. EA's acquisition of the *UFC* licence has led to its first next-gen

△×□ Physics engines continue to improve, making every lunging tackle or thunderous hook more realistic.



△OX□ The tech behind EA's new UFC game is incredible – realistic fighters bruise and bleed accurately.

only sports title, the imaginatively-titled *EA Sports UFC*. Now, the fighters look incredible in screens, but it's only when you see the likes of Jon Jones and Alex Gustafsson moving that you can see the power of the new engine. Toes actually press against the canvas, muscles contort, skin indents – for a sport as physical as MMA, this is the level of detail next-gen technology allows and next-gen adopters demand.

And because the engine allows high volumes of simultaneous physics calculations, it will make matches more unpredictable, more organic. And that's the key in sports games. Believability comes from a curious place. It has to feel both familiar and unique at the same time. Like you could be watching it on TV, but not something you've literally seen before. It's a very difficult balancing act, and one that will only get easier as the physics capabilities of engines like Ignite improve. Developers will be able to build games with strong enough

foundations that they can let the engine itself dictate the way they play.

LET'S PLAY

We've seen how powerful the internet and PSN has been for sports gaming already on PS3 – smooth, low-latency matches, online tournaments, even matches where every in-game player is controlled by real people. Where next, though? Well, expect to see modes like *FIFA*'s all-conquering Ultimate Team appear in almost every sports game, leveraging free-to-play mechanics into long-standing franchises to extend their lives for both player and creator.

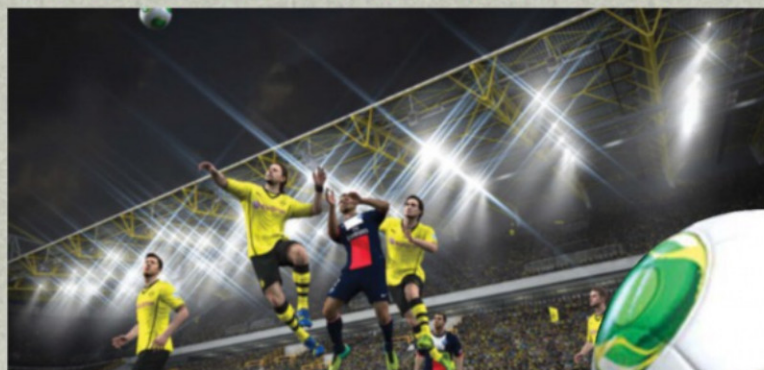
This is potentially dangerous. Ultimate Team gets away with asking you for real money by both allowing non-paying players access to good cards, and by making real-cash packs actually feel like they're worthwhile. As many failed free-to-play games have proven, getting this kind of thing right is difficult. With EA and 2K Sports at the helm of sporting's greatest franchises, expect these tightropes to be walked with due diligence. If a less experienced team gets involved, it could be trouble. In other words, let's hope *PES* doesn't try it.

All of these features are exciting, but they're remnants from last-gen. The novel concept of playing online is still fresh in the minds of those brought up on pixelated footballers, but for a youthful audience whose attention spans barely last long enough to wait five seconds to skip a YouTube ad,

it's positively old hat. The future, then, lies not in playing yourself, but curiously, in watching others. The PS4

has helped drive Twitch TV into the mainstream consciousness, or at least the mainstream gamer's, creating a bizarre world where gaming becomes as much of a performance as it does a pastime. Bizarre for action games, perhaps, but could you think of a more fitting genre to broadcast to an audience? After all, professional sport

GAME CHANGER: FIFA 14



At first glance, the differences between *FIFA 14* on PS3 and PS4 are minimal. The PS3 version is still a fine-looking and exciting game, as well-made as ever and packed with content. It just takes time. This isn't the same radical overhaul as we saw between PS2 and PS3, because we're not going from standard to high definition. We are, however, moving to 1080p, lending everything a crispness that has always been absent, and we are moving to EA's next-gen

Ignite engine, which uses the processing power available to calculate an infinite number of animations that are determined by physics. So the more you play, the more you see, and the more you realise how it's affecting gameplay. Turns that weren't possible before, deflections the PS3 couldn't recreate... it makes *FIFA 14* more organic and believable.

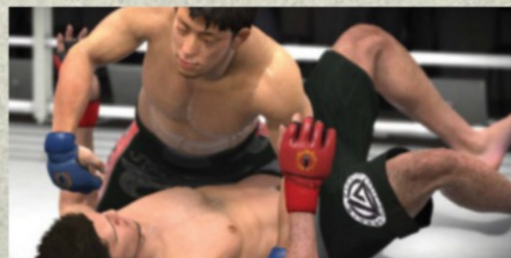


PS3 INSPIRATION



ULTIMATE TEAM (FIFA)

Arguably the biggest success story in gaming anywhere, and certainly the biggest thing to happen to sports gaming in the last decade. This once-niche card-collecting mode is both hideously addictive and a legitimate money-spinner for EA.



BROADCAST (EA SPORTS MMA)

Twitch TV has taken the mantle and now basically owns game streaming, but the little-played *EA Sports MMA* got there first. Every week, top players would duke it out in matches streamed globally, and a live commentary team would call the fights.



MY PLAYER (NBA 2K)

With the (then) processing heft of the PS3, sports games began letting you play out your career as an individual as opposed to a whole team. The pinnacle is *NBA 2K14*'s myPlayer, which combines in-game action with a *Mass Effect*-style branching storyline.

(and the TV-broadcast trappings that run through almost all the modern sports games) are both activity and show, both competition and pageantry.

As Twitch evolves (which it's doing at a rapid rate – just look at Twitch Plays Pokémon for an insight into its potential), there's every chance sports gaming stars will emerge. Already, professional eSports PC players stream matches to hundreds of thousands and earn great advertising money doing so, and it can only be a matter of time before top *FIFA*, *NBA 2K* and *Madden* players mobilise and turn Twitch into

with gamers. That's the stadium where the Lakers play basketball.

These games aren't sports per se, but they carry many familiar elements, and feature specific ideas that could well find themselves in traditional sports games in the future. One of the most significant portions of a match in *League Of Legends* is called 'picks and bans', where the two teams select their characters but also have the option of banning specific characters from the other team. Imagine a similar mode in *FIFA*, where you build a team from a stack of players, but the opponent can

"EXPECT TO SEE MODES LIKE ULTIMATE TEAM IN ALMOST EVERY SPORTS GAME"

their own platform for broadcasting their matches around the world.

If this does catch on, it will inform the design of the games themselves, too. We might see changes soon – elements as simple as a new way of highlighting player names or a space for a 'selfie' camera feed so viewers can see the exasperation and triumph on their favourite players' faces.

More intriguing is the potential for a full-steam move into the eSports realm. Games like *League Of Legends* and *DOTA 2* aren't based on sports, but they have cultivated a genuinely huge following. *League Of Legends*' recent World Championship Finals sold out the Staples Center in LA and filled it

ban certain superstars if they know you're particularly good with them. Now imagine that where every player is controlled by a real person. The potential is immense.

Sports gaming has a bright future, and one that will appeal to the broadest of audiences. The technology in PS4 and beyond (yes, we're talking about Morpheus – VR goalkeeper mode anyone?) will let developers get even closer to replicating the real world. And the amazing strides taken each year in internet speeds means we'll be playing these games in new and amazing ways.

△×□ Launch title *NBA 2K14* is already visually amazing, so imagine where we'll be in a few years...





TOP TEN GROWN UP GAMES

EVEN US CHILDISH TYPES SOMETIMES ENJOY A MORE MATURE, NUANCED EXPERIENCE. WE DON'T MEAN PORN, WE MEAN GAMES THAT HAVE NARRATIVE THEMES AND COMPLEX GAMEPLAY THAT MIGHT BE A BIT TOO MUCH FOR THE DARLING KIDDIES. HERE ARE TEN OF THE BEST



LA NOIRE

1 A MURDER MYSTERY set in the grimy underbelly of Forties Los Angeles doesn't exactly sound the type of thing kids would flock to. *LA Noire* has some very adult themes, with main character Cole Phelps struggling with infidelity, ambition and wartime regrets. There are also some messy, graphic murder scenes, including tracking down the infamous Black Dahlia killer and exploring his hideaway. With only shades of grey where other games present morality as black and white, *LA Noire* will make you think and question its themes long after the story is over.



DARK SOULS

6 WHAT A SURPRISE, a *Play* Top Ten list has *Dark Souls* on it. We are nothing if not predictable. *Dark Souls* is a grown up game in two different ways. The obvious one is the difficulty. We all know how hard the game is by now, and children with their MSG-addled attention spans might not have the patience to master it. More importantly, though, *Dark Souls* is mature in its approach to storytelling. Nothing is explained. Peel back the surface and do some exploration though, and a mysterious, melancholic world filled with history begins to take shape.



VIRTUE'S LAST REWARD

2 VISUAL NOVELS ARE by their very nature quite grown up – not many kids want to sit through that many words, after all. *Virtue's Last Reward* is mature in other ways, though. The amount of crazy sci-fi concepts in the plot – from time travel to parallel realities to bases on the moon and everything in between – can be hard for even an adult to get their head around. The amount of awesome plot twists spread across multiple timelines can be pretty hard to keep track of unless you've got a decent brain between your ears.



MANHUNT

7 IF YOU NEED us to tell you that *Manhunt* is not a game for children, you are not fit to be a parent. Rockstar's most controversial game to date, *Manhunt* cast you as the main character in an interactive snuff film, giving the player the ability to decide how brutally they murder their prey. In a sick but strangely genius move, the player gets more points for performing the nastier kills, encouraging you to give in to your greed and lose your humanity in the process. It's not a great game, but there are some very interesting ideas behind *Manhunt*.



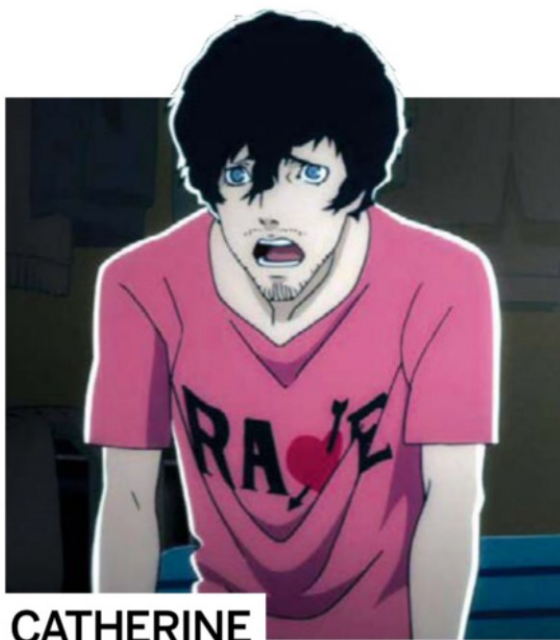
THE LAST OF US

3 **GAMES DON'T GET** much more grown up than *The Last Of Us*, a violent tale of human nature set in a bleak post-apocalypse. Along with some brutal but not gratuitous gore, the most adult aspect of the game is how it explores the relationship between protagonists Joel and Ellie. This surrogate father/daughter relationship will be especially poignant to parents who know how it feels to raise, protect and love a child. The struggles that the two face are so affecting because of how well the game builds up and portrays their relationship.



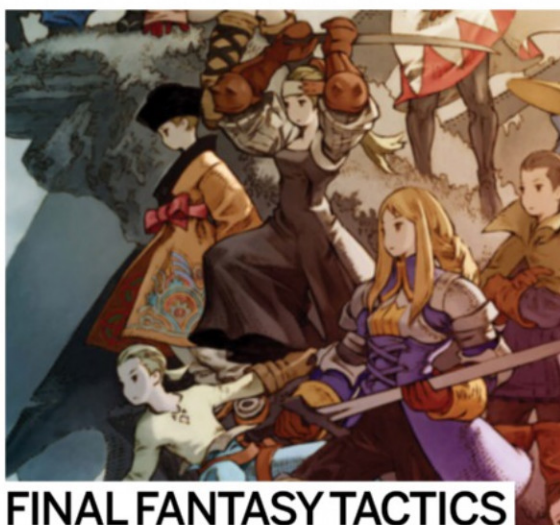
SILENT HILL 2

8 **PROBABLY THE MOST** grown up survival-horror game we've ever played, especially when compared to something like *Resident Evil*. *Silent Hill* thrives on psychological horror, playing with your brain and making you imagine the terror that lies around the corner. Main character James Sunderland is not battling the forces of evil but the nightmares of his own distorted conscience. Slowly unravelling the mysteries of his past while surviving the hellish reality that is *Silent Hill* is one of the scariest, most disturbing experiences of our lives.



CATHERINE

4 **HOW MANY GAMES** explore relationships and the consequences behind cheating? One, and it's *Catherine*. Don't let the beautiful anime art fool you – this is a game that deals with real situations and real feelings, albeit with some fantastical elements to make the story a bit more exciting. It's telling that the best bits of *Catherine* are the talky, story parts, with the puzzle gameplay actually getting in the way of the good stuff. There are no right or wrong answers in *Catherine*, just difficult decisions to be made by a man with no real direction in life.



FINAL FANTASY TACTICS

9 **MOST FINAL FANTASY** games have rather juvenile stories, albeit ones that are epic in scope. Still, your average *FF* plot amounts to little more than 'save the world from this evil thing'. *Final Fantasy Tactics* manages to buck the trend, telling a *Game Of Thrones*-esque tale of political intrigue, backstabbing and social rank with a backdrop of medieval wartime. Don't worry, there's still a good dose of world saving and evil demons, but the plot of *Final Fantasy Tactics* is still the most mature we've seen from the series to this day.



XCOM: ENEMY UNKNOWN

5 **XCOM DOESN'T HAVE** a mature, thought-provoking story or graphic gore – in fact, in terms of presentation it's perfectly suitable for children. The reason it makes our list is simply the fact that it is *really sodding difficult*. Play it properly, on Classic difficulty and with permadeath turned on, and *XCOM* will make you cry, scream and beg for mercy. As adults we can barely handle *XCOM*, so what chance do children have? The standalone expansion, *Enemy Within*, also qualifies. Any strategy fan that is yet to play either needs to reassess their priorities.



SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS

10 **FEW GAMES BRING** a tear to our eyes, but *Shadow Of The Colossus*, a story about a boy and a horse who travel a barren world murdering giants, managed to hit us right in the feels. Like *Dark Souls* there is little story to speak of, at least not directly forced into your eyeballs. The world of *Shadow Of The Colossus* is beautiful in its own melancholy way, lonely and stark with a thought-provoking, emotional story inferred but left up to you to piece together. Grab the HD collection with *Ico* and check it out for yourself.

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Final Fantasy XIV

Another level up for Square's revived MMO



DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Square Enix

DEVELOPER
Square Enix

RELEASE DATE
Out Now

PSN PRICE
£29.99 plus monthly fee

PLAYERS
MMO

AGE RATING
16+

TWITTER
@SquareEnix_EU

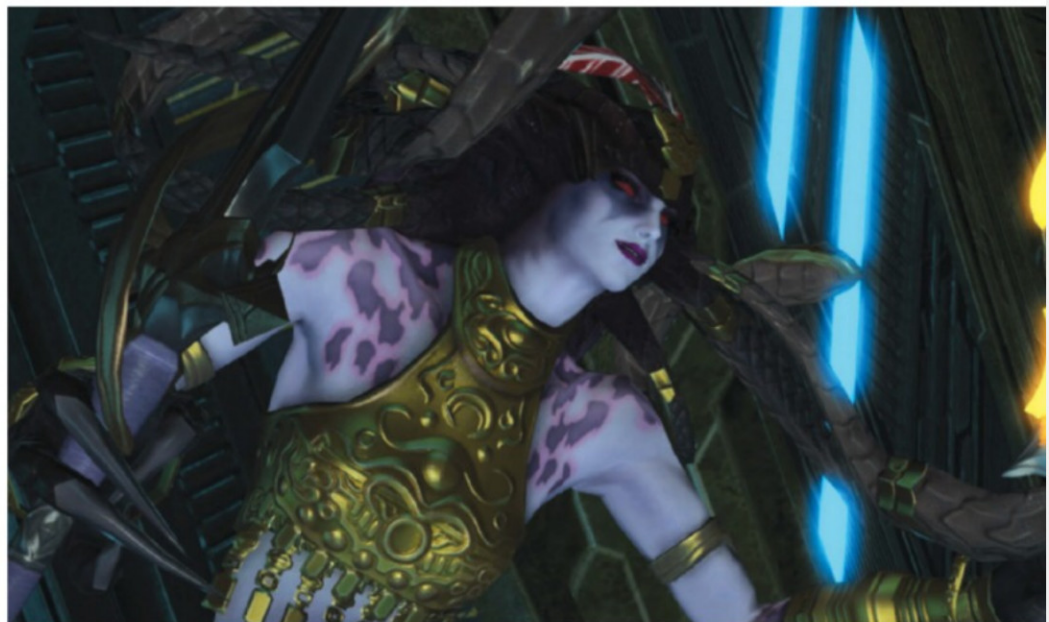
INSTALL SIZE
11GB

Trophies 39



FINAL FANTASY XIV has been the most successful disaster in the franchise's history. While strong MMO launches are rarer than original Capcom fighting games, *XIV*'s original PC launch as still something of a mess even by genre standards, but the move to pull the plug and start over on the game was a bold one. Square took the hit, and we're glad it did – the MMO relaunched last summer to a hugely positive reception on PC and PS3. Concessions were made in order to get the game running on console, but those are a thing of the past on PS4 – this version is more or less on par with the PC version (well, anything bar a top flight machine that can run the game at 391 fps), and not just in the visual department either.

While we've got a lot of time for the clever manner in which Square Enix has tailored the game's interface to work almost as well with a controller as it does with a mouse and keyboard, that more traditional method is an option now as well – connect any devices and the game will recognise them and let you switch. Combine this with the





△OX□ They might look hostile (and they are, for the most part) but you can take jobs for many tribes later on.



△OX□ Primal battles are a highlight of the game and can be revisited in harder forms in the endgame.



△OX□ Some of the bosses in the hardcore level 50 dungeons might be familiar to long-term *Final Fantasy* players...



△OX□ Creature and world design is excellent, and it's far more impressive on PS4 than it was on PS3 last year.

improved visuals, frame rate and online stability and you've got the best console MMO so far, especially since Square hasn't been shy about adding new content since release.

While the *World Of Warcraft* model was once to charge for both game subscription and expansions, Square has instead taken a leaf out of the *DC Universe Online* book – pay the monthly fee and all the frequently added new content is yours to explore. It makes for a world that you can drop into at your leisure and though the initial free month might have been enough for you to see all the original content at launch, the major patches (which come every couple of months) add enough awesome new stuff that it can be hard to resist heading back to Eorzea every time something new happens. Or it could even be, as has been the case for us, that you can't bring yourself to leave in the first place. Find a good group and just helping out and running old dungeons is enough to keep you logging in most days, which is the way it should be with an MMO and frankly, after the start it had, it's amazing that *FFXIV* is there already less than a year into its new life.

As we said in the review of the PS3 version last year, the transfer to console is extremely impressive. Rather than going down the *DC Universe* route here and making it more input-dependant for console gamers used to smashing buttons during fights, it's more about cooldown management and ability

cycles. Currently, each class (with one exception) can only progress into a single end-game Job, but that's guaranteed to change in an update or two's time. Even so, there's a wealth of content on the route from level one noob to level 50 master and even though much of it conforms to the usual MMO basics of fetch quests and 'kill x monsters' missions, the instances make it all worthwhile. Both public events

yet. If Square can maintain this pace in updating the game with new material, there's no reason *FFXIV* couldn't outlive the console itself – it's as enjoyable an MMO as any other on the market today and proof that the genre can indeed work on consoles. With free upgrades to the PS4 version offered for existing PS3 players (and account/character transfer options too), heading back to Eorzea should be a no-brainer – it's

“SQUARE HASN'T EXACTLY BEEN SHY ABOUT ADDING NEW CONTENT SINCE THE GAME WAS RELEASED”

(known as FATEs) and instanced events offer twists on the standard fare through gimmicks and new mechanics that must be learned in order to succeed. This ain't *Dark Souls* – by all means check out YouTube vids and wikis, since you'll be far more use to a group if you know a fight than if you're going into it blind.

And with the PS4 version arriving just after the latest patch, even those who think they've seen all there is to see in the game are in for a surprise. New dungeons, tougher Primal bosses, player housing, oodles of new gear, vanity clothing, better party-finding options – the game has improved hugely since launch, with the recent Maelstrom patch being perhaps the most comprehensive set of additions

those that haven't yet jumped in that Square will be wanting to reach out to most, and we're happy to try and help bring in some new blood. An MMO lives or dies by its community and although already going strong at some 2 million players, *FFXIV* only stands to improve as it continues to grow.

Luke Albigés

VERDICT

'MMOs don't work on consoles' is a fallacy that has gone on for too long. *A Realm Reborn* is an excellent MMO that only continues to get better with every single batch of new content.

85%



BioShock Infinite: Burial At Sea – Episode Two

Will the circle be unbroken?



DETAILS

PUBLISHER
2K Games
DEVELOPER
Irrational Games
PSN PRICE
£11.99
PLAYERS
1
INSTALL SIZE
2.9GB
AGE RATING
18
TWITTER
@IrrationalGames

Trophies 10



THIS IS IT then, the end of *BioShock* as we know it. Irrational Games is no more, and while 2K might get another studio to pump out some more *BioShock* games in the future, we all know they won't be the same. As the last piece of the franchise to ever come out of Ken Levine and his team, it's up to *Burial At Sea – Episode Two* to tie things up and end things on a high note. In some ways it is successful, in others not at all.

Taking control of Elizabeth for the first time in the story, we once again revisit Rapture – the underwater dystopia created by hyper-libertarian Andrew Ryan. Explaining the story up to this point would take far too long, but the gist of it is that after a whole bunch of dimension hopping, Liz has to rescue a Little Sister from an underwater prison, all by herself.

It's apparent how Elizabeth is different than Booker, with lower health and a weaker melee attack. A little sexist,

perhaps, but she *is* smaller and weaker than Booker, and as such requires a different approach to combat. Stealth is far more of an emphasis in Episode Two, as taking on bad guys head-on will see Liz quickly gunned down.

A big help to your sneaking mission is a new Plasmid, Peeping Tom, that allows Elizabeth to see enemy positions through walls as well as turn invisible for brief moments. With a reduced number of Plasmids on offer, Peeping Tom will be your go-to option for the majority of your three-to-four hours in Rapture, but it feels so indispensable that you probably won't mind too much.

A new crossbow also makes things much easier, with silent tranquiliser darts that can often be recovered from enemy bodies. You'll get a couple more varieties of darts as you go, all useful for getting the drop on bad guys before they see you. It's a cool weapon, but can sometimes make things feel too

easy. Still, ammo is relatively scarce, so coming to rely on the bow isn't wise.

Combat is still a bit off, as anyone who has played *BioShock* before will know. It's not bad and it always works as intended, but it's never quite as enjoyable as other first-person shooters. That said, *BioShock* has always lived on the strength of its world and storytelling rather than tight shooting mechanics, and that's still the case here... kind of.

Our main issue with *Burial At Sea* is just how unnecessary the whole thing feels. Irrational tries to tie together the plot of *Infinite* with the original game, but it feels more like unnecessary fan service for the sake of it rather than a story that needed to be told. While Rapture is a great setting, returning to it feels almost cynical, Levine and company banking on people's nostalgia for the city under the sea.

And while it is great to be back in Rapture, we'd have rather the team took the chance to tell more stories in



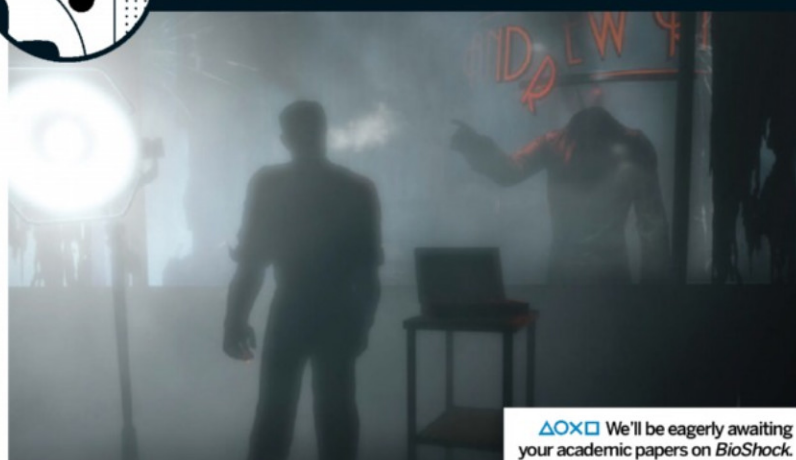
ΔOX□ We guess even the denizens of incredible underwater cities need ways to...spend their time...



"WHILE RAPTURE IS A GREAT SETTING, RETURNING TO IT FEELS ALMOST CYNICAL"



PLAY CHALLENGE



ΔOX□ We'll be eagerly awaiting your academic papers on *BioShock*.

SHARE THESE FEATS, IF YOU CAN...



1998 MODE

▲ THE THIEF-INSPIRED 1998 mode forces you to play the game without killing a single enemy. Are you a dedicated pacifist?



TOO MUCH FREE TIME

■ CAN YOU WRITE an essay on the connections between every *BioShock* game and Irrational's earlier *System Shock* series?

Beaten our trials? Let us know @PlayMag_UK!

the amazing sky-world of Columbia, perhaps not involving Booker and Elizabeth at all. Their story felt complete at the end of *Infinite*, and continuing it for the sake of DLC feels like a shame.

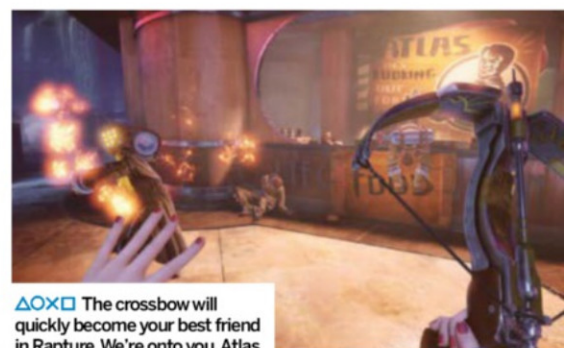
Burial At Sea – Episode Two offers more of what made *BioShock Infinite* one of our favourite games of last year, and is a fitting send off for Irrational. In another way, it's a bit too much of a good thing, a return to a world and characters that we perfect just the way they were. What can't be denied are the production values and quality of the product, and quibbles aside, *Burial At Sea – Episode Two* is still a worthwhile use of your time.

Sam Smith

VERDICT

A good game, but one that feels a bit emotionally bankrupt after the wonders of *Infinite* and the original *BioShock*. There are far worse ways to end a franchise, that's for sure.

70%

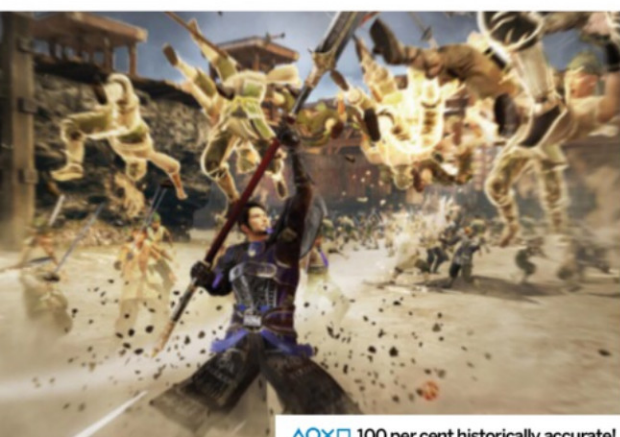


ΔOX□ The crossbow will quickly become your best friend in Rapture. We're onto you, Atlas.



Dynasty Warriors 8 Xtreme Legends Complete Edition

We wish all history lessons were this exciting



△○× 100 per cent historically accurate!



ALSO COMING TO VITA

THERE'S A PHRASE we are fond of here on **Play:** the *Dynasty Warriors* series is the videogame equivalent of junk food. You know it isn't good for you, but it's super tasty nonetheless. *Dynasty Warriors* is like an Eighties action flick too, with stupid dialogue and awful acting but scores of badass dudes fighting through thousands of chumps with the power of kung-fu and over-the-top weaponry. What part of this doesn't sound awesome?

This *Complete Edition* collects a port of the original *Dynasty Warriors 8*, released last year on PS3, with the new *Xtreme Legends* expansion (which you can pick up on PS3 individually). Fans will know the deal, with the expansion adding a bunch of new stages for each faction's story, five new characters, a new challenge mode and more. Add this to the pretty huge original game and you have a package

that contains hundreds and hundreds of hours of content.

Being fair, yes, that content mainly consists of pressing Square with the occasional tap of Triangle to perform flashy combos. *Dynasty Warriors* has always been a simple game, but to write it off because of this is doing the franchise a disservice. Just because you can mash your way through missions doesn't mean you have to, and masters will be able to use combos properly to rack up huge scores. Each character has a specific weapon with which they can perform two EX moves (one of which is new to *Xtreme Legends*) as well as the ability to switch between two weapons on the fly, three super Musou attacks, a crazy Rage mode, counter-attacks and more. If you do just spam the same move over and over, you are really missing out.

A new element system adds a bit of complexity when selecting weapons. Each weapon is one of three elements, and in a basic rock/paper/scissors system, this element can either be weak, strong or neutral against your foe's. Attack an enemy with a weapon weak to yours and you can launch a bonus attack, taking out everyone around you, but the reverse is true if you are the one with the weaker weapon. It's a basic system, but adds a small amount of thought and makes weapon switching more of a necessity than it has been in previous games.

Dynasty Warriors 8 doesn't do anything drastically new with the formula (the last one to try that was

DETAILS

PUBLISHER

Tecmo Koei

DEVELOPER

Omega Force

PRICE

£39.99

PLAYERS

1-2

INSTALL SIZE

35 GB

AGE RATING

16

TWITTER

@tecmokoeieurope

Trophies 44



1

3

12

28

△○× The guys in red are Wu, one of the five helpfully colour-coordinated factions you'll be playing as. They are our favourites. All glory to Wu!





△○×□ An included encyclopaedia mode can teach you a lot about the real Three Kingdoms period if you're interested in learning.

DW6, and it kind of sucked) but instead simply refines what already works until it practically shines. And it *does* work. While the West seems to have trouble understanding what it is that makes *Dynasty Warriors* great, the series is a huge money-maker in Japan and one of Tecmo Koei's biggest assets. This

The amount of content on offer here is staggering, with 82 unique characters, each with their own EX weapon with its own unique moveset – that's right, no clone characters whatsoever. Over 100 stages and a huge Ambition Mode (a kind of broad campaign mode) mean that completionists have an enormous

“THIS IS, WITHOUT A DOUBT, THE BEST DYNASTY WARRIORS GAME TO DATE”

is, without a doubt, the best *Dynasty Warriors* game to date.

The jump to PS4 is a pretty minor one, though. There's definitely been a graphics upgrade, but it isn't going to blow your mind. Textures are a bit crisper and armour is a bit shiner, but the main improvements are an increased amount of enemy soldiers on screen at once, as well as a smoother frame rate that is closer to 60fps. The whole thing still isn't exactly pretty, but it's a necessary sacrifice to have so much action on screen at once, and besides, the dodgy graphics add to the B-movie charm.

If you've already sunk a bunch of hours into the game on PS3, the ability to bring your save over and carry on with the PS4 version is a welcome addition. For the most part, though, this edition will mainly appeal to those who have yet to play *DW8* and fancy it on their new consoles.

challenge to overcome, so don't expect an easy Platinum.

Of course, if you really don't like *Dynasty Warriors*, this isn't going to change your mind, and if you already do, you know why it's such a great series. For those on the outskirts who might have been put off by other negative press, now is the time to discover just how good a series *Dynasty Warriors* is. Turn off your brain and sink into the action.

Sam Smith

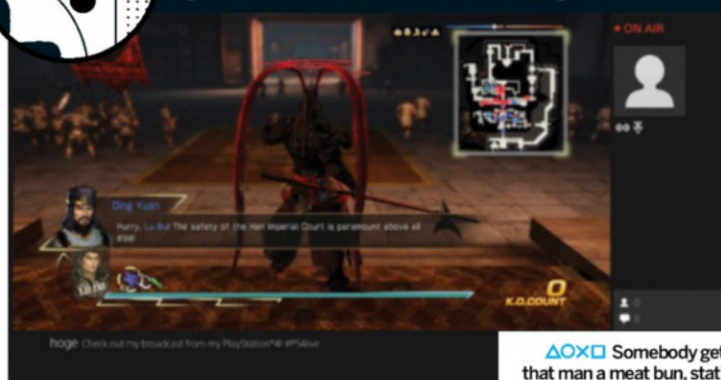
VERDICT

Simple, mashy fun just the way we like it, *Dynasty Warriors 8 Xtreme Legends Complete Edition* is the best version of the best game in the series to date.

80%



STREAM THIS



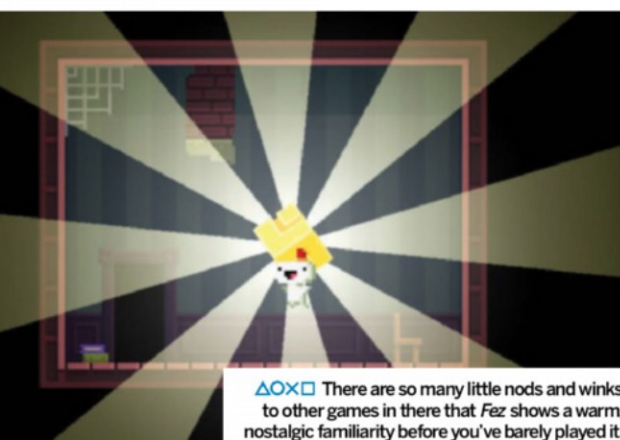
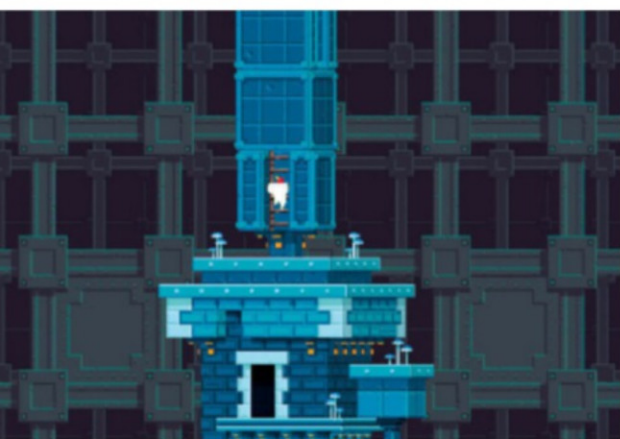
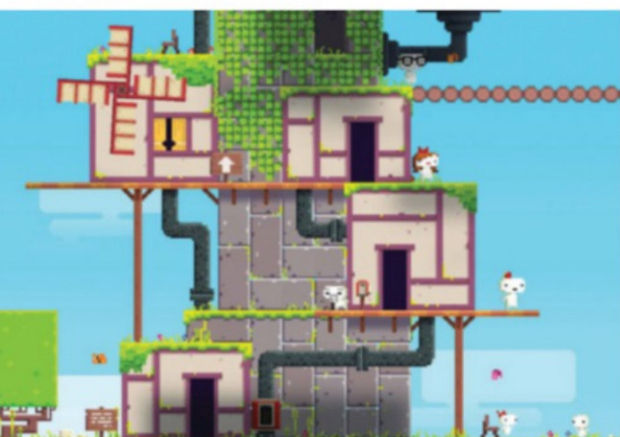
△○×□ Somebody get that man a meat bun, stat!

GET INTERACTIVE

Like what you see? Give something back...

Dynasty Warriors 8 on PS4 features one of the first examples of interactive streaming on the console. Viewers watching you smash up ancient China can opt to gift you a helpful item, from a health bun to a Musou-restoring pot of wine and everything in-between. It's

very minor, and probably won't be used much, but it's good to see developers starting to play around with a feature that could end up being a really big deal in the future. Plus, it gives people an extra incentive to tune in and see what streaming on PS4 is all about.



△OX□ There are so many little nods and winks to other games in there that *Fez* shows a warm, nostalgic familiarity before you've barely played it.

Fez

You spin me right round



ALSO ON PS3
AND VITA

IF YOU'RE NOT one of the million or so people that caught *Fez* the first time around (on PC or whatever an Xbox 360 is), then this might be a little tricky to explain, because *Fez* is strange. Awesome but strange.

Beginning in a retro-styled 2D pixel world, Gomez (the little dude in the fez) gains the power to rotate his perspective and shift dimensions from just the one flat 2D perspective to the three other 2D planes. Like rotating a square and viewing its four different sides, different ways of travelling through the area become available as you spin the world around. It's a 2D platformer in a 3D world, in other words. If you're not following this, we're genuinely sorry, but trust us, it's the perfect set-up for puzzling brilliance. You'll just have to play it and see what the hell we're talking about.

Tasked with recovering a heap of cubes that have been scattered all over the world to fix the hexahe... You know what? It's puzzles. *Fez* is all about puzzles. Amazing, mind-bendy, teach your brain a new way to think puzzles. The story is unremarkably incidental – though it obviously involves saving the world, the

focus here is definitely on rekindling a sense of achievement and adventure through world-expanding puzzles.

And in that regard, *Fez* is utterly absorbing. From the start of the game just wandering around this pretty, weird little world, through the hooray-I-think-I-get-this puzzle-solving phase, and finally to tearing your hair out and resisting the almighty urge to look up the last few solutions, it's one of the most captivating experiences we've ever had with a videogame. You can kind of just enjoy being in the world – with a gorgeous day/night cycle, little creatures that react to you, and various different themed areas within the world, it really is pleasantly immersive – but the real excitement comes from running it blind and really testing yourself.

There's so little out there that's like this that it's a real waste of an excellent set of brain-enraging puzzles if you're clinging desperately to a guide the whole way through. It takes a little time to get used to not being handed solutions on a plate (*Assassin's Creed*, you've ruined our patience), but once your mind kicks into gear, you'll find the solutions come flowing faster and faster. Until the last few, which are frustrating beyond belief, but the sense of satisfaction from having solved a room you've been coming back to again and again for weeks is unlike anything else out there. Except maybe *Dark Souls*, but only in the thrill of overcoming adversity unaided.

The puzzles themselves range from relatively simple turn-the-camera-around shifts in perspective to reach new places, to world-spanning codes and messages. We're still looking for some damn owls. One minute you'll be congratulating yourself for some particularly tricky bit of thinking, the next you'll be screaming at a room that just

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Polytron Corporation

DEVELOPER
In-house

PSN PRICE
£7.99

PLAYERS
1

INSTALL SIZE
500MB

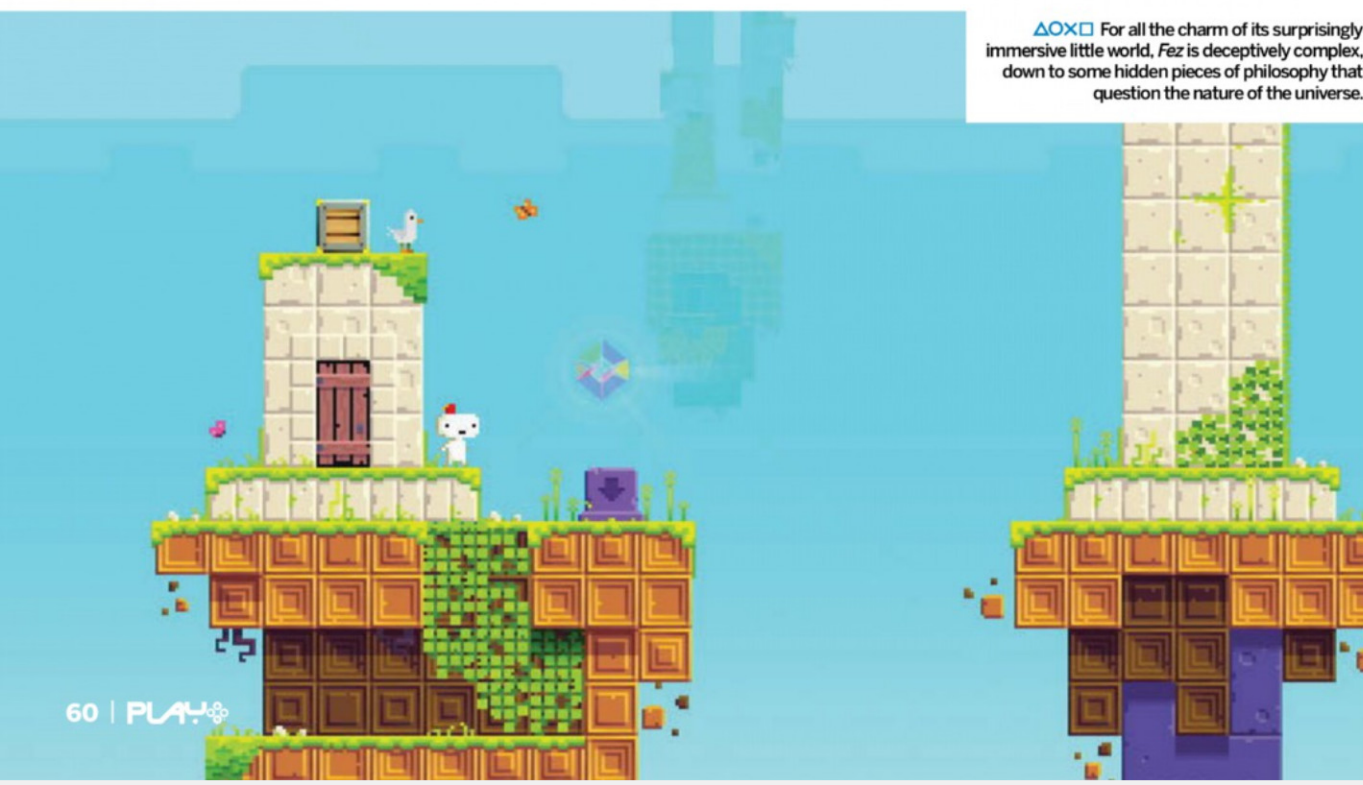
AGE RATING
3+

TWITTER
@Polytron

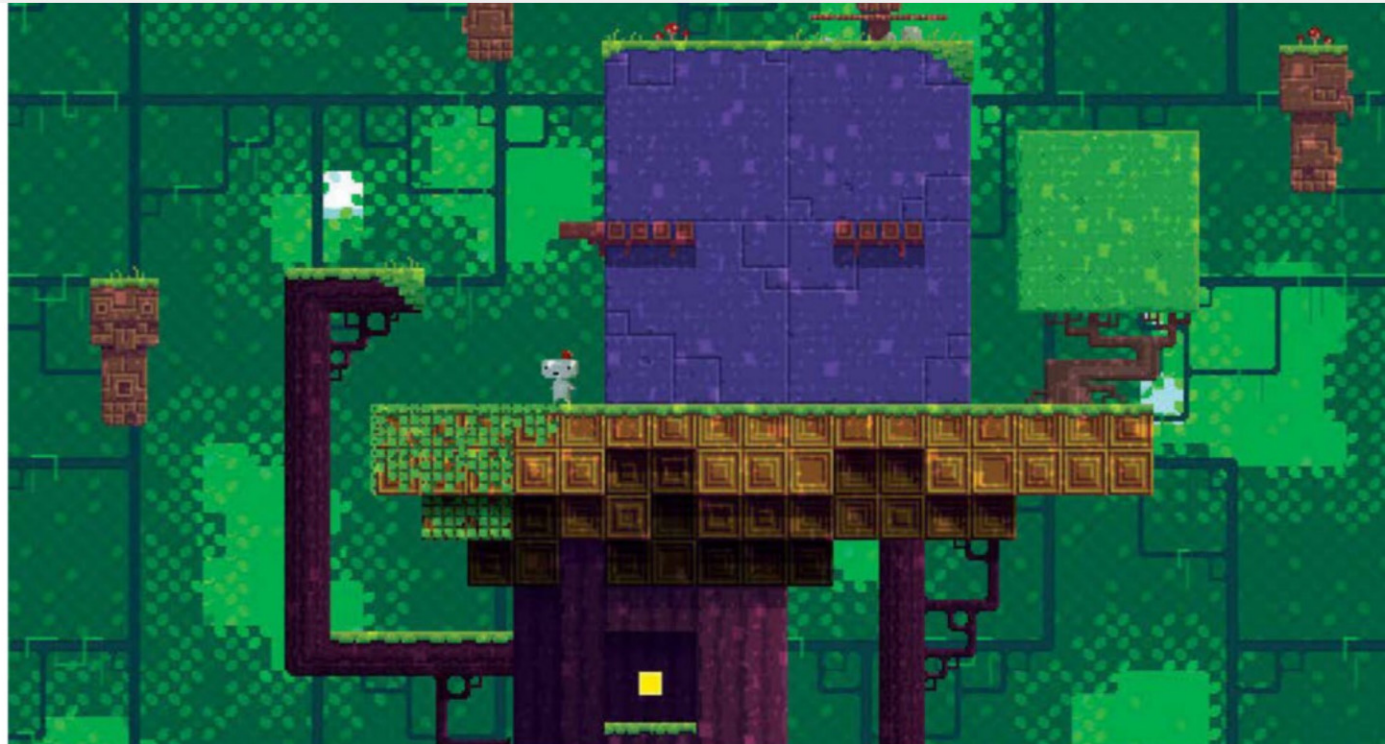
Trophies 12



△OX□ For all the charm of its surprisingly immersive little world, *Fez* is deceptively complex, down to some hidden pieces of philosophy that question the nature of the universe.



△×□ If you're having trouble, look at everything. Too often, the answer was staring right at us, but we'd breezed through assuming it was background information.



refuses to turn gold on the world map, the satisfying sign of all secrets found, doors unlocked, cubes attained from an area. 'What's wrong with you, room? What did I not do? WHAT DID I NOT DO?' became something of an anguished battle cry for us. You might play it differently, foolishly disregarding the excellent mental challenges of this odd little universe, but there's no denying that even the platforming puzzles are cleverly laid out.

Gomez himself handles a little floatily, but consistently, so once you've got a handle on how far he can leap, it's really all on you to not send him to a screaming death. Not that it makes much of a difference, as there are infinite lives and you'll be put right back on wherever it is you fell from, but it's just about the right amount of try-and-fail punishment to keep things interesting. The spinning camera perspective shift thing does take a little while to grasp, but once you've got it, the feeling of accomplishment is great. So if I jump *now*, spin *twice*, and let go... Yes! Not dead! It's surprising how much you start to get involved with looking after Gomez, feeling a pang of guilt every time he plummets to his doom, but then he is brought to life very well, taking a little snooze if you're taking a while, or playing with his hat.

Something that might put a small handful of you off is that there's no violence. No, really. It's designed to be devoid of aggression, and there aren't any enemies to fight. It's all about the puzzling, the exploration. And as good as the vast majority of those puzzles are, there are a couple that feel needlessly obtuse, very much outside the logical steps you would realistically take. And while it's lovely to jump back into the

world after a spell away, there's very little replay value to the puzzling aspect, with New Game+ essentially allowing you to round up the cubes you didn't get the first time around.

That said, *Fez* is at the top of its genre, one of the best puzzle games we've played. Hell, it's just one of the best games we've played in general. That it's on the PS4 in 60fps at 1080p makes us very happy indeed. Now, if you'll excuse us, we've got some goddamn owls to track down.

Rebecca Richards

VERDICT

If you're someone that appreciates a well-constructed game and loves a good set of puzzles, *Fez* is the perfect package of platforming, abstract thinking and retro love.

95%

"IT'S A REAL WASTE OF A SET OF BRAIN-ENRAGING PUZZLES IF YOU'RE CLINGING TO A GUIDE"



△×□ It's designer Phil Fish that everyone focuses on, but Paul Robertson (the pixel artist) and Disasterpeace (the musician) are worthy of high praise too.

CROSS-PLATFORM? YES, PLEASE

So not only is *Fez* available for PS4, it's also on PS3 and Vita. And not only that, but your save is transferable between them all, meaning you can pick up exactly where you left off, straight from one console to another like freaking magic. And not only that, but if you buy it for one console, you can download and play it on all the rest for free. So while we're severely disappointed that *Fez 2* is a very unlikely possibility, if we can't have *Fez 2*, at least we can have the first glorious *Fez* and play it everywhere. Hooray for *Fez*.



The Witch And The Hundred Knight

Evil witch needs personality transplant, badly



DETAILS

PUBLISHER
NIS America

DEVELOPER
Nippon Ichi Software

PSN PRICE
£39.99

PLAYERS
1

INSTALL SIZE
1.8GB

AGE RATING
16+

TWITTER
@NISAmerica

Trophies 48

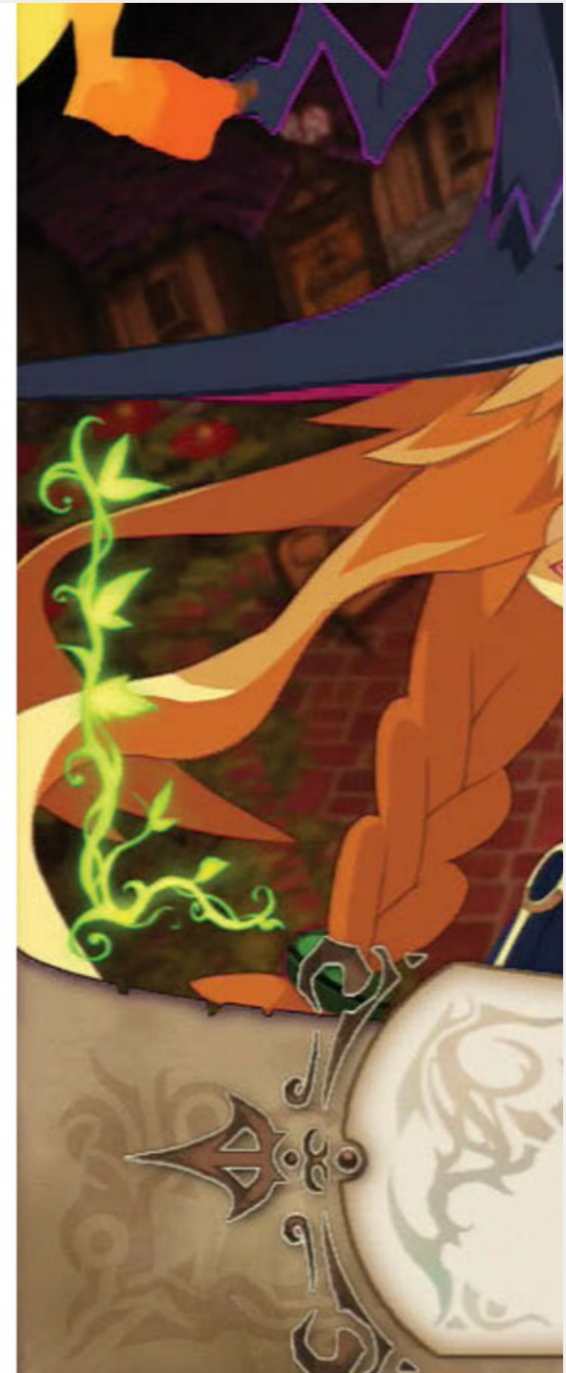


THE WITCH AND *The Hundred Knight* is not for everyone. Alright, pretty much no game is, but we really mean it. Not by a long shot. Just look at it. PS2 era graphics? Grating American acting? Button-bashing combat mixed with a bizarre long-winded fantasy story, plus a heap of obtuse, disconnected battle systems to figure out? Good thing we're into all that, then. Though maybe not the vocals. Thanks for including the Japanese voices with English text option, Nippon Ichi.

You are but an indentured Hundred Knight, conjured up to obey the Swamp Witch Metallia, an obnoxious brat intent on poisoning the land with her swampy foulness. While we've seen our fair share of antagonist lead characters, not many of them have been a spectacularly bosomed young lady with a filthy mouth, darkly twisted sense of morality, and plans to take over the world with swamp goo. If you like that sort of thing (which we do, obviously), there's a hell of a lot of it to enjoy. And if you don't, the story is skippable. If you just want to get right down to the action part of this action-RPG, you're free to do so.

Because *The Witch And The Hundred Knight* is definitely not a strategy-RPG, despite its Nippon Ichi stablemates. It's not a tactical RPG; it's firmly focused on action. It's a hack-and-slash trying on Daddy *Diablo*'s robes, with a little jaunty *Skylanders* hat for good measure. Yup, button-bashing is the order of the day, but it's what comes before the button-bashing that's the interesting part. For the three kinds of weapon – slash, blunt and magic – you have five inventory slots. Fill in each of these with a weapon, and you've got yourself a combo string. Axe, spear, staff, sword, staff, for example.

Different creatures have different resistances, so with each new area, you'll need to re-equip accordingly. But! Each individual weapon has its own randomised die number from one to five. Put weapons in that order, one to five and back to one again, and you'll get some attack boosts. Like most aspects of this game, it seems kind of simple, until you find two brilliant weapons with the same die number. Use them both and lose the bonus? Or manoeuvre your other weapons around it? Sure, it's not the most complex system in the world, but for the game that *Hundred Knight* is



unashamedly trying to be – a hack-and-slash with a story – it does a fine job of keeping your attention.

Getting you back in the dungeon is the point of *Hundred Knight*, mostly enforced with your GigaCals, a clock that, when it runs down, whacks your stats down too. It forces you to leave the area and return to the hub, EXP and loot intact. *Hundred Knight* works hard to make you feel like there are other worthwhile elements to this grinding, and there are countless things for the completionist to



△○× Like *Deadly Premonition*, we could see the flaws in *The Witch And The Hundred Knight* but enjoyed it all the same for the bizarre game that it was.

GIGACALS EXPLORED

When in the levels themselves, your GigaCals (ie time on the clock) are what you want to keep an eye on. You can extend this time with QTEs (Quick-Time Eating) so when your enemies are at 20 per cent health or lower, you can eat them, giving you more GigaCals and a little health back. Your health will restore itself naturally over time, but restoring it expends GigaCals, as does exploring a new area and restoring stamina. So the first time you enter a dungeon, you might not get all the way through unless you're snappy with the QTEs and sufficiently levelled up. Checkpoint exits counter this, though, so if you're having trouble, just do what you can, leave and return to the same spot. But unless you're an impatient sort of person, running through levels without trying to kill everything, find all the loot and 100 per cent the area, you shouldn't find any trouble bumping up your GigaCals to stay in the area. The problem comes when you dash through only to find a trickier dungeon after it that you're now totally not prepared for...



Talk

How about this? If you agree to be my "nighttime attendant," I will think about extending an invitation.

△×□ While character-led story-based games are a big seller in Japan, Nippon Ichi is pretty savvy to its Western audience. So yes, you can skip the cut-scenes if you like...

explore. 100 per cent area exploration, lots of different environments/enemies, ten randomised rewards for increasingly better combat, little badass versions of existing enemies that drop better loot, etc. Also, loot. It comes in four flavours: Common, Rare, Epic, and Legendary. Legendary pink-text gear is rare as unicorn shit, and there's nothing like that feeling of picking up something badass and going back to dominate an area. Yes, the difficulty curve is pretty steep, and yes, we got far too into taking mighty retribution on those that initially proved hard, but that's the game we're talking about here; it's grindy but it's rewarding.

Considering the various mechanics this game has to offer, it really is surprising that all the basics get their own full tutorial, while the actual layers of combat are doled out in tiny portions. 12 hours in, we were still getting snippets of tutorials for new additions to gameplay. It layers up brilliantly; just when you think you might be getting bored, when you've learned the attack patterns

of the beasties in the area and you're stuck levelling up before a boss fight, shaboom, have some summons. Or the ability to dig up shiny new treasures.

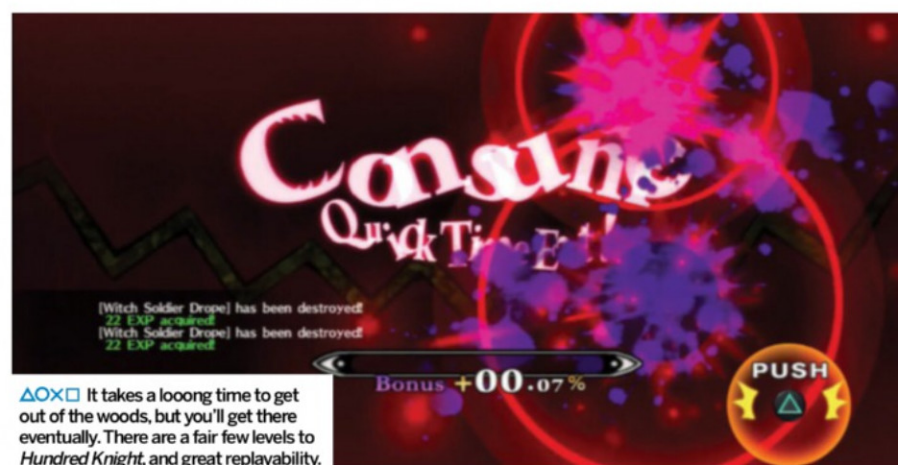
Though we enjoyed it, it's easy to see that this isn't a game a lot of people will care for and we couldn't help but think it would have been better with a buddy. Given a slight competitive 'my combo's bigger than your combo' edge, *Hundred Knight* could have been something approaching *Diablo*; as it stands, it just comes down to whether you want these sorts of complex systems in your button-bashing solo hack-and-slashers.

Rebecca Richards

VERDICT

It's not nearly as deep as it is complex and kind of fractured, but it is pleasantly absorbing, and there are a variety of elements to keep you entertained while you go dungeon crawling.

72%



△×□ It takes a looong time to get out of the woods, but you'll get there eventually. There are a fair few levels to *Hundred Knight*, and great replayability.

Final Fantasy X/X-2 HD Remaster

Sphere is the mind killer



DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Square Enix

DEVELOPER
In-house

PRICE
£29.99

PLAYERS
1

AGE RATING
12+

TWITTER
@square_enix_eu

INSTALL SIZE
3GB each

Trophies 69



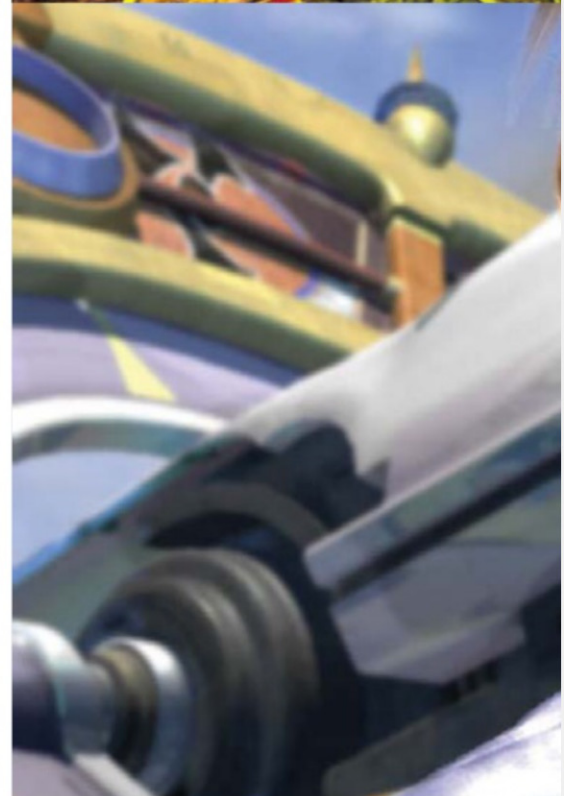
ALSO ON PS3

DON'T WORRY, FANS of space-time equilibrium – it turns out that nobody has travelled back in time to mess with the established JRPG order. *FFX* is still a great game a decade on and its unexpected sequel is still loathed by pretty much everyone, despite being pretty good underneath all those layers of glitzy nonsense. It's much like the *XIII* trilogy in that respect, *X-2* attracting so much negative attention over a few questionable design decisions (not least that to turn *X*'s stoic leading lady into a pop princess) that only those who managed to clear these mental hurdles ever saw how good the core game could actually be. It's not something that you can easily sell people on, either – those who hated it back in the day will see *that* intro and be filled with rage anew while for anyone who missed out on it, there's

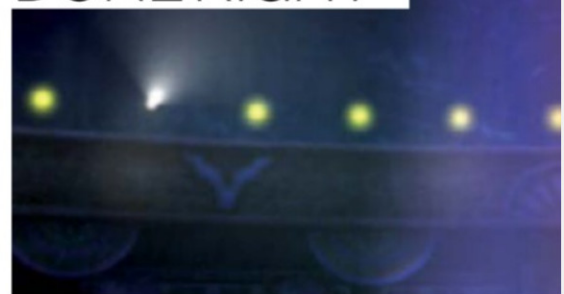
a decade's worth of better RPGs and crazier fan service games (somehow) to recommend in its stead.

No, it's *FFX* that takes centre stage here, with *X-2* little more than a freebie chucked in for liking old things and as such, we elect to focus primarily on the main series game here. The first thing that leaps out is just how dated some aspects of the game feel, CG cut-scenes in particular offering their own gaming equivalent of carbon dating – perhaps we've been spoiled by the in-engine splendour of games like *inFamous: Second Son* and *Ground Zeroes* lately but the jarring cuts to CGI (where some characters now actually look *worse* than their 3D models) are somewhat awkward by today's standards, especially against the upscaled visuals of the rest of the game. Also, this is Square's first voiced RPG and it couldn't be more obvious. Characters often deliver lines as though they're reading them in a foreign language and have no idea where the emphasis should go, while some sequences (yes, the laughing scene) serve only to highlight how far voice acting in videogames has come in the last ten years.

Mechanically, though, *X* is still superb. Criticisms of being too linear at the time seem to have faded since *XIII* became the more topical butt of that particular joke, though the structure of the two games is actually remarkably similar. Linear progression leading up to a more open final act... only *XII* has bucked this trend since *Final Fantasy* learned to talk, and even then only to introduce its own equally divisive mechanics along the way. Still, *X*'s Sphere Grid is perhaps the perfect example of character progression done right, especially if you



"X'S SPHERE GRID IS PERHAPS THE PERFECT EXAMPLE OF CHARACTER PROGRESSION DONE RIGHT"



△○× Rikku's Overdrive is the most complex of the lot. Better start experimenting early...



△OX□ Square's FMV prowess remains unmatched to this day, but these scenes are starting to show their age. PS4 can do better in real-time, after all.



△OX□ If you can get through the intro to X-2 without vomiting blood, you'll probably quite enjoy the game.



△OX□ FFX's turn-based battle system is still one of the best of its kind, its depth and strengths really coming to the fore in the endgame.

have the stones to choose the Expert Grid and freely explore the abilities available. Yes, it's possible to screw yourself over and have to do a ten-hour detention to right those wrongs but with great power comes... well, you know the rest. Respect the Sphere Grid, for it will sure as hell not respect you if you wander too far from the expected path and accidentally make Kimahri your best character. Nobody wants that. There's far greater versatility offered by the Expert option, but certain key enemies and bosses can prove troublesome if you haven't unlocked the ability to exploit a weakness.

That's another aspect that really dates *Final Fantasy X* actually, namely the expectation that everyone will be following guides. In today's smartphone-equipped world, it's probably not far from the truth but still, the amount of missable gear and content here makes some kind of walkthrough almost essential if you don't want to miss out on certain equipment or upgrades. We defy anyone to grab every Al Bhed Primer and all ultimate weapons without external assistance, let alone fully upgrading said gear or successfully challenging the Dark Aeons.

But whatever, because Blitzball. Just as the Triple Triad tune from *FFVIII* strikes fear into our hearts (thanks to how many hours of more productive living it must have cost us), *FFX*'s

submerged sport offers a diversion worth delaying the end of the world for. It's a game in itself – we'd easily have thrown 30 quid at Blitzball on Vita alone – and all of the unlocks associated with it make it pretty much an essential component for any 100 per cent run, but the fact remains that it'd be just as horribly addictive even if it served no actual gameplay purpose.

A wealth of other side missions and a jam-packed post-game mean that there's loads to do even once Spira is saved, with a brutal Trophy list offering further encouragement to put in the hours and max everything out. You're probably looking at 100 hours per game to even get close to the pair of Platins, so no value concerns here whatsoever. And hey, if we all go out and buy it, maybe Square will see fit to do an HD remaster of *Final Fantasy XII*, which would of course be The Best Thing Ever. *X* is still great, *X-2* is still weird and we're still playing both. Again. For like the eighth time.

Luke Albigés

VERDICT

A fine remaster of one of the best RPGs of the PS2 era and *Final Fantasy X-2*, Square's duo still holds up well a decade on – testament to the great game design at the core of each.

83%

Luftrausers

War: somehow even browner than usual



SONY HAS DONE

an outstanding job of attracting all the hottest talent on the indie scene to PlayStation. In giving

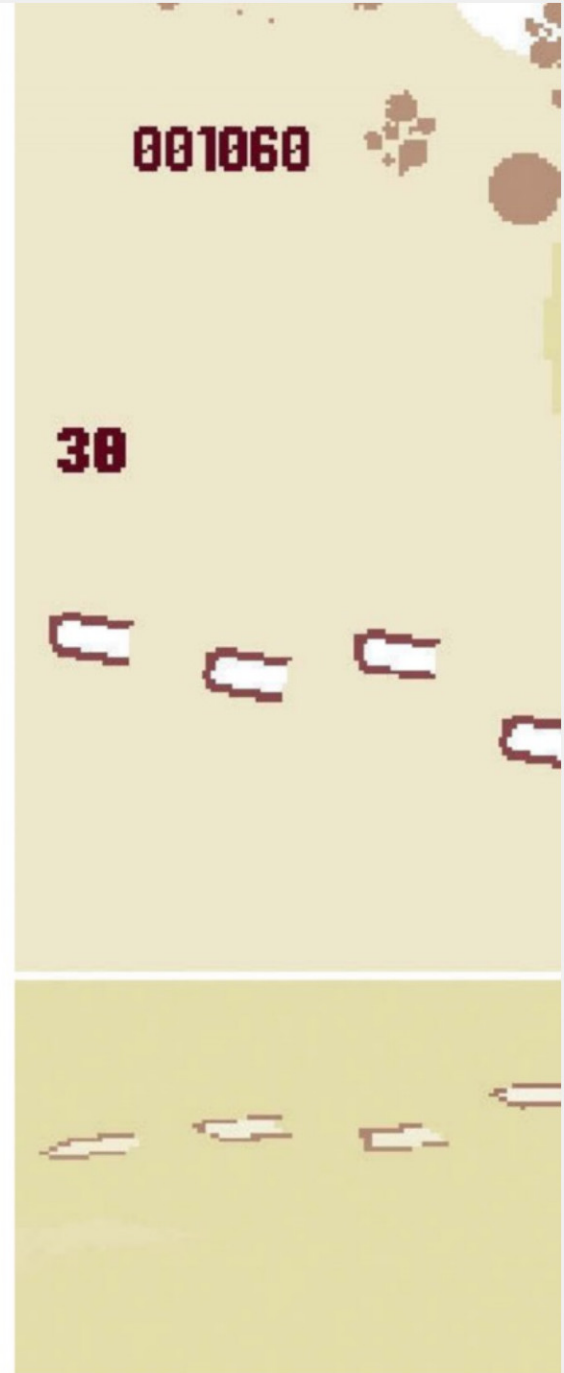
smaller developers an open stage and a huge install base across three platforms, we've seen the number of new releases rise hugely and while these might not be the most incredible-looking showcases for the power of PlayStation, a good game is a good game. While not truly ugly, Vlambeer's latest is a pixel-heavy monochrome affair that likely wouldn't have challenged the PS2. But as simple as it may appear, there's depth there way beyond that which the limited colour palette would suggest.

It's hard to shake the sensation that *Luftrausers* both looks and feels like a cheap mobile game. Appearance can be struck off as a design decision, sure, but the basic go/shoot two-button controls leave little to the imagination. It's not until the unlockable parts start to flow that the depth begins to present itself, with each combination of weapon, hull and engine offering a surprisingly different craft to pilot. It's here that the depth starts to become clear and the initially awkward thrust controls start to make sense – turning speed, boost

effectiveness and other stats gradually come to the fore and while you'll settle on a combo you like fairly quickly, experimenting with every permutation can quickly lead to a new favourite.

Enemy waves are dynamic and/or organic based on how well you're doing, with the screen quickly filled with enemy craft to take down and flak, missiles and AA fire to avoid. Do well enough and a text pop-up will announce the arrival of a 'boss' of sorts, one of several huge and deadly vessels that can take up most of the screen. Taking them down will naturally result in a huge score boost, but the real trick is to tie this into a multiplier bonus from destroying a bunch of smaller enemies – max out the multiplier (which quickly caps at 20, somewhat hampering proper score attack play) before dropping one of the big boys and you'll strike it rich.

It's the variety of different ship parts and customisation options that you're really paying for here over the game's free browser counterpart, and each of the 125 variants genuinely does play differently. Some parts have unique effects that have some kind of synergy with others, while some combinations simply don't work. Regardless, each is individually named (an awesome touch) and with a Trophy



DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Devolver Digital

DEVELOPER
Vlambeer

RELEASE DATE
Out Now

PSN PRICE
£7.29

PLAYERS
1

AGE RATING
12+

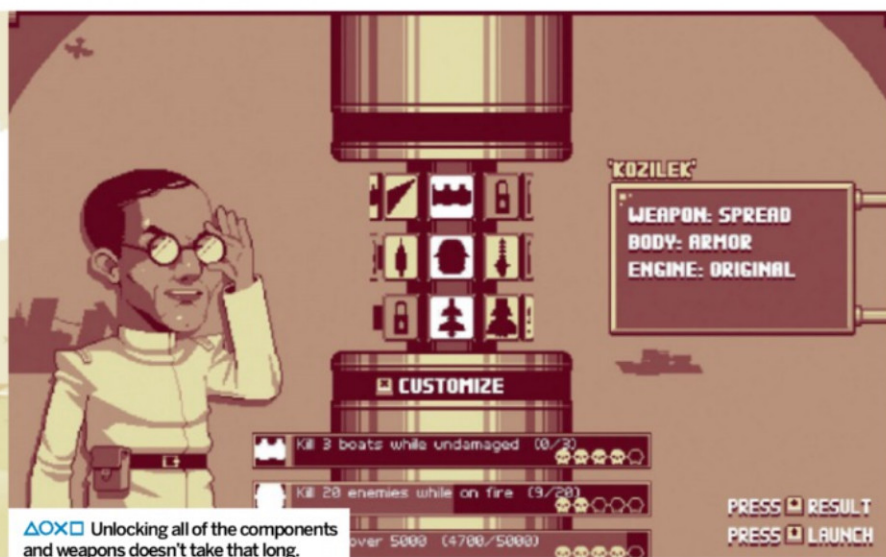
TWITTER
@vlambeer

INSTALL SIZE
300Mb

Trophies 12

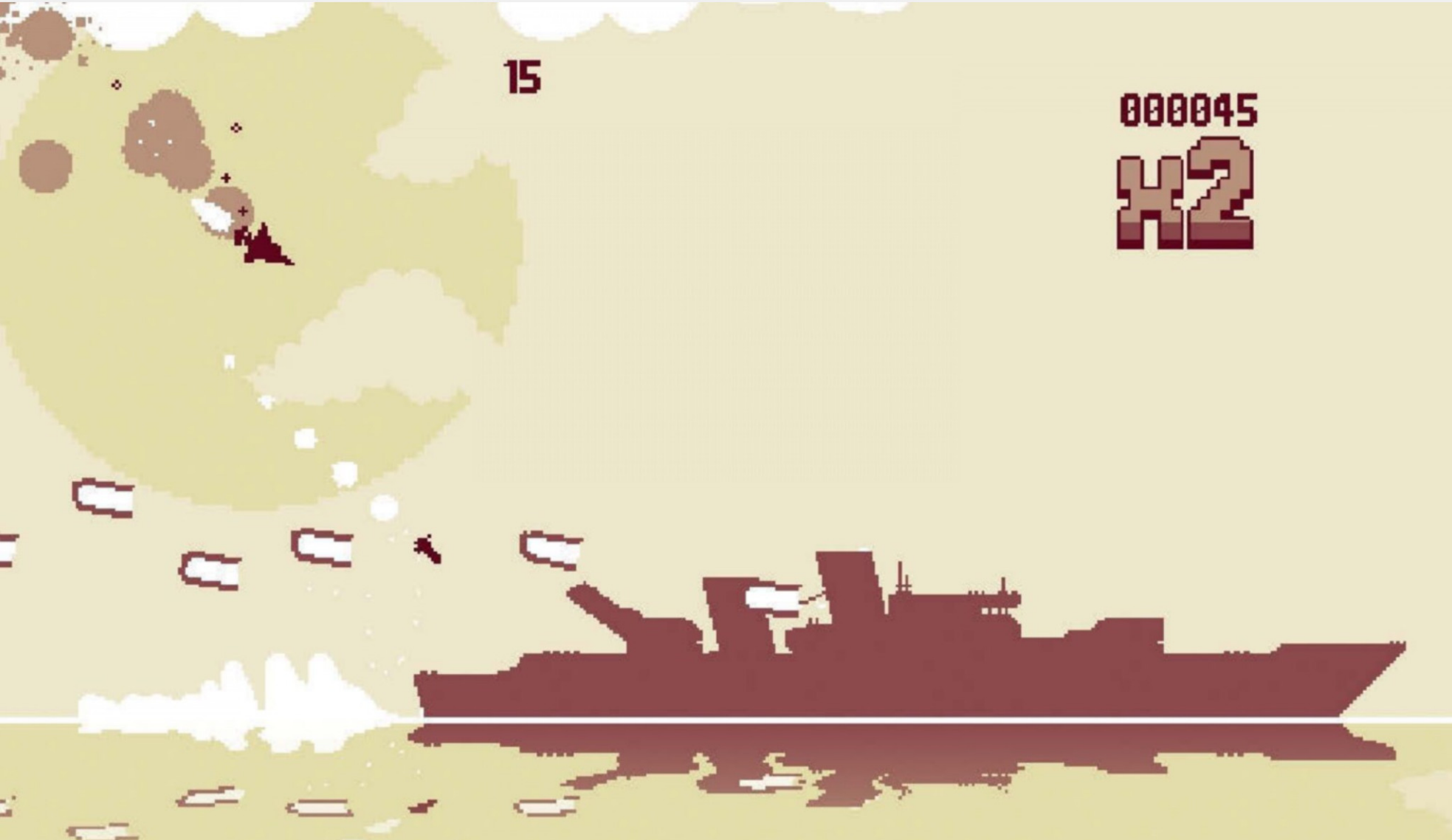


△○×□ Think battleships are tough?
Just wait until you see the blimps...



△○×□ Unlocking all of the components
and weapons doesn't take that long.

for trying out every one, you should soon settle on a few favourites. While most offer only slight changes to the way the mechanics work, others change things up massively – the Melee body, for instance, negates collision damage but makes bullets near-lethal, effectively turning the game into a deadly bullet hell version of arcade classic *Joust*, while weapons like the laser kill mobility in favour of pure



“THE BASIC GO/SHOOT TWO-BUTTON CONTROLS LEAVE LITTLE TO THE IMAGINATION”

△○×□ A clean strafing run on a huge enemy ship is properly satisfying.

punch. However you like to play, there's a combo in there for you somewhere.

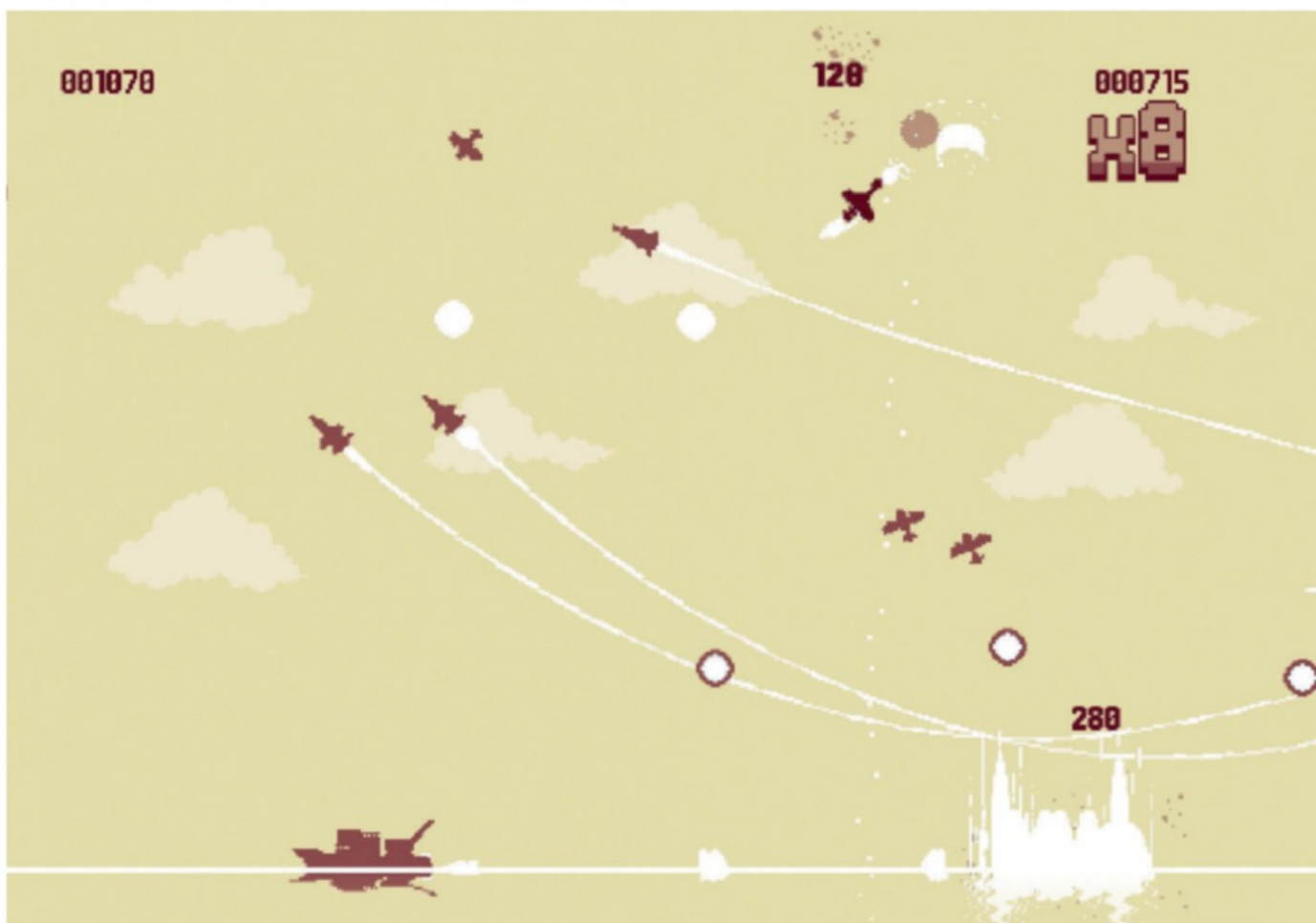
This retro-chic shooter is more *Guitar Hero* than *DDR* – a capped multiplier means that decent players should spend most of their time at the top end of the scoring spectrum. Criticism? No. Long-term score attack viability concern? Yes. It's only a matter of time before someone finds the inevitable broken parts combo and survives a fortnight, scoring billions of points in the process. But despite a few lingering issues with this monochrome delight, we can't seem to stop playing it.

Luke Albigés

VERDICT

An entertaining shooter and one that we can't seem to put down. Looks cool, plays well and is fun for a while, but there are a bunch of more involved score attack games out there.

79%



OR YOU COULD TRY

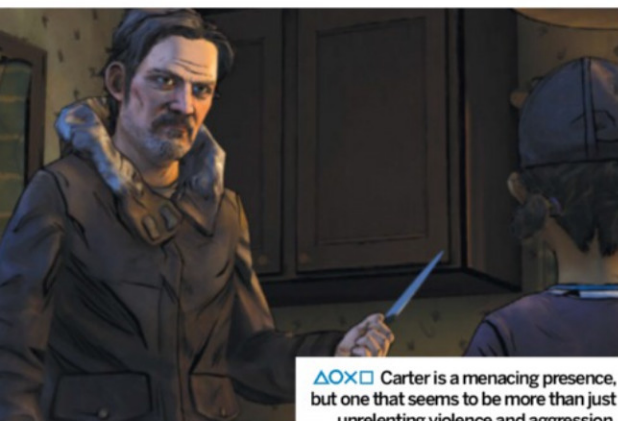


RESOGUN A more sophisticated shooter, Housemarque's PS4 debut offers deeper mechanics and greater longevity thanks to its leaderboards.

"IT'S OBVIOUS WHICH OF THESE CHARACTERS ARE GOING TO HAVE A SIGNIFICANT ROLE TO PLAY FURTHER DOWN THE LINE"

The Walking Dead Season Two Episode 2: A House Divided

The darkness cometh



△○×□ Carter is a menacing presence, but one that seems to be more than just unrelenting violence and aggression.



DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Telltale Games

DEVELOPER
Telltale Games

PSN PRICE
£3.99

PLAYERS
1

INSTALL SIZE
360Mb

AGE RATING
18+

TWITTER
@TelltaleGames

Trophies 8



THE FACT THAT Telltale Games is now so clearly in its groove with *The Walking Dead* is fast

becoming both the series' greatest strength and most damning failure. On the one hand there's a level of polish to the interactions and narrative flow that other studios would happily donate their right arm to a walker to achieve, resulting in expert pacing and characters that feel as though they actually existed and lived before you stumbled upon them.

On the other hand, a sense of déjà vu and unwelcome familiarity is starting to set in and permeate every minute you spend with Clementine and the gang – the same type of interaction, the same kind of hurdles to jump. This wasn't so much of a problem with *Season Two's* opening episode, with most of us simply happy to be back in this bleak world of death and suspicion that we'd come to develop a morose love affair with in

Season One. That episode saw us take control of Clementine for the first time, and that was novel enough to cover the cracks that are now starting to appear.

A House Divided doesn't get interesting until two-thirds of the way through its (roughly) two-hour duration. Up until that point conversations, actions and thoughts are caught up in significant bouts of character exposition and introductions. While well-written and mostly engaging, we now understand the structure of these games so well that it's obvious which of these characters are going to have a significant role to play further down the line. Scenes that seem threatening, therefore, are emotionally muted thanks to our ability to see through the fabric of how these games are constructed.

Despite that, Clementine herself takes a few more interesting steps toward adulthood and a position of responsibility in this chapter. Having learned how to fend for herself in the previous episode,



△OX□ As per usual, Clementine regularly finds herself at the mercy of walkers who have somehow managed to misplace their nose.



△OX□ By removing the head, or destroying the brain...



△OX□ The art style still stands out as innovative and interesting. Roll on *Tales From The Borderlands*!

this one sees her quite literally babysit and do her best to support and look after others. She gravitates towards the emotionally unstable members of her new group and does her best to calm them while wrestling with her status as the 'kid', although as time goes on it becomes increasingly clear that she's mature beyond others that are at least twice her age.

This immaturity of specific individuals becomes the catalyst for a finale that ranks amongst the most tense and foreboding of anything we've seen from *The Walking Dead* so far and will, hopefully, take the story to an exciting place. Fresh face Carter has the potential to affect the lives of everyone around him – a man whose true intentions are difficult to read, but is framed through such a negative light that it all feels like an act of misdirection... he's likely going

to turn out to be a very different person from the one shown here.

Telltale must have the courage to use Carter and his role in the finale as a springboard to drive this second season into top gear. These characters that have gone through two full episodes worth of teasing exposition and introductions must now be given time and space to breathe and grow.

There's too much time in *A House Divided* assigned to characters walking through woods and searching for their friends, all of this coated in the usual sets of QTEs and button-hammering moments of action we're well accustomed to. The first season was at its best when the pace slowed and the travelling stopped, the cast only then capable of destroying itself from within via a script that examined the lengths one person will go for another – even if that means a third party suffers.

With only three episodes remaining there's little time left for this kind of depth to be established and explored. It would be unfair to describe this second episode as a missed opportunity following the strength of the first, but it does bring into sharp focus the fact that time is running short if Telltale harbours any ambition to attain the same level of praise and respect that was lavished upon the first season.

John Robertson

ARTHRITIC ENGINE Frame rate is a problem



This being the eighth *The Walking Dead* episode from Telltale (including *400 Days*) you would have thought that the studio would have managed to tune the game engine into a well-oiled machine by now. Sadly, that's not the case.

Frame rate issues and full-on stutters still crop up pretty frequently and do their best to undermine some of *A House Divided*'s more exciting moments. The issue is most irritating when the story moves directly from speech to action, with those first QTEs you're asked to perform becoming near enough impossible to predict because of that dip in frame rate (sometimes resulting in failure and death). We understand that *The Walking Dead* is primarily a narrative-driven experience, but it would still be nice to have technology that works. Telltale has been doing this long enough now.

VERDICT

An inferior entry in the series to its predecessor, albeit one that does hint at better things to come from future episodes. Telltale has to step up its storytelling from this point on.

74%

BlazBlue: Chrono Phantasma

The wheel of fate is still turning



DETAILS

PUBLISHER

Aksys Games

DEVELOPER

Arc System Works

PRICE

\$49.99

PLAYERS

1-2

INSTALL SIZE

11 GB

AGE RATING

12+

TWITTER

@ArcSystemWorksU

Trophies 48



THERE ARE PROBABLY

quite a few Japanese beat-'em-up developers who would like to buy

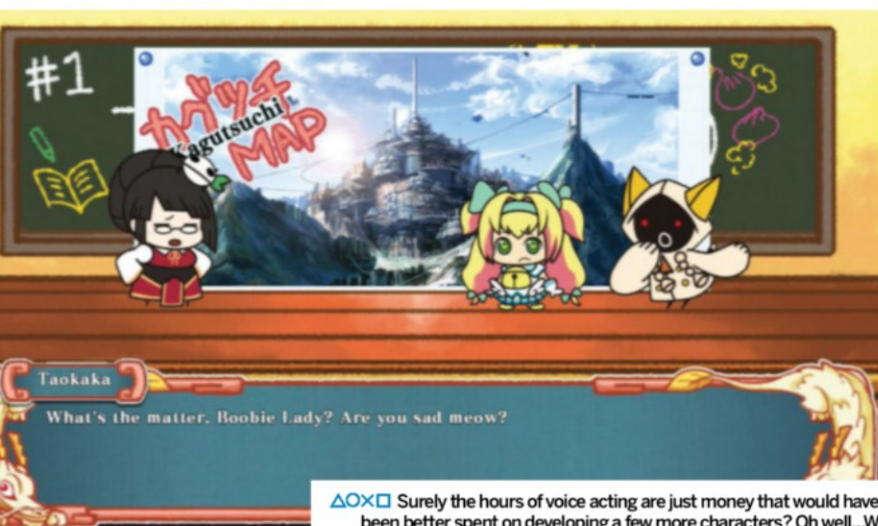
Yoshinori Ono and his Capcom buddies a round of beers. After *Street Fighter IV* reminded the masses that they enjoyed and should play more fighting games, that bandwagon once again began to roll and in fact, it was the pretenders that rose up in the wake of *SFIV* that brought the fighting scene back to rude health – for many, Capcom's accessible brawler was a reminder of why they fell out of love with the genre in the first place, with the myriad inventive, explosive and downright ridiculous fighters it facilitated being the eye-openers that really brought the fight fans back.

But Arc never went away. It wasn't easy for a while there – the team was at one point reduced to releasing a *Guilty Gear* game on Wii, a move about as audience-unaware as a download-only Cliff Richard album – but in *BlazBlue*, it had a new IP to surf this new wave of fighting frenzy. And oh, how it has grown. Criticisms of a limited roster certainly can't be levelled at the game any more, with 23 characters available from the off, plus one unlockable

dude with a big sword and another two offered as DLC – glass cannon Terumi and tournament-banned tier list queen Kokonoe, perhaps the first DLC cash grab we can actually respect. Each feels unique thanks to their own Drive attacks, so what the fourth button (you know, the one that isn't light, mid or heavy) actually does is entirely dependant on character chosen. Oh, and Overdrive now piles on an additional layer of tech too, with restricted character-specific buffs available if you're willing to sacrifice your ability to break out of an opponent's combo.

It's this variety that cements *BlazBlue* as the hardcore 2D fighter of choice, but it's also the element that makes the game near impossible to balance. Hazama's Drive, for instance, is a *UMVC3*-style Spidey web pull for mobility; Rachel's lets her control the wind to affect projectiles and move properties; Valkenhayn's turns him into a rushdown-centric wolf with no defences; Tager's magnetises foes to allow his charged grapples to draw them in from half a screen away. The Drive system, on top of each character's individual play-style, makes every match-up unique, demanding knowledge, research and experience beyond simply how to deal with character archetypes – you need to know what to expect from and how to counter every individual character.

So yeah, *Chrono Phantasma* is kinda hardcore in that respect, but this latest *BlazBlue* revision comes equipped with a mode to make beat-'em-up novices feel special as well. Stylish Mode is a button-masher's paradise – simplified inputs make it easy to bust out impressive combos without really even knowing how. Mashing can lead to solid combos, then, but it's not going to help you break a tight defence or beat Drive gimmicks, so it'll only carry you so far before you need to



AOX Sure! The hours of voice acting are just money that would have been better spent on developing a few more characters? Oh well...W



re a man! You're dressed... like a fop! Like a
v could Ikaruga turn out like this while I was gone?



△×□ Kagura must be unlocked by clearing Story mode – stick it on Stylish mode and mash then skip text and this doesn't take long.



△×□ The roster has grown to a respectable size, especially considering how different every character is.

start flapping properly and learn to fly for yourself. As a form of gaming water wings, it's hard to be mad at this inclusion – a good player should always beat a masher and if this can help ease people into what could otherwise be a near-impenetrable fighter, we're all for it.

Positive as we may be, the odd allocation of resources can't go unmentioned here. With so many small studios crowd-funding new fighting games or looking for a break, it must be galling to see a studio like Arc spend more on voice acting and Story mode cut-scenes in one game than the small fry have between them. Having an entirely voiced 20-hour story mode seems like a dazzling waste of resources – it's almost as if someone on the team accidentally merged the game code with that of a visual novel and it got signed off all the same. *Injustice* got away with this kind of self-indulgence on account of its popular stars and its potential for playground argument resolution, but this cast of anime nobodies can't really command the same level of attention. Still, if there's an audience for it (which, based on how the series is evolving, there clearly must be), then we're fine with this rather odd method for funding further *BlazBlue* titles.

As much as the resources poured into *Chrono Phantasma*'s additional modes might have been better spent

on enhancing the roster further or working on the impossible balancing act, *BlazBlue*'s shortcomings will be evident only to a niche within a niche. Sure, there are characters who maybe aren't viable at a competitive level, but that only makes the arrival of a good Bullet or Tager player even more terrifying – all the anti-spam training in the world isn't going to prepare you for a relentless Tager who just wants to throw you until you die.

Concessions towards accessibility don't hurt the game and the enhanced roster only helps it, leading us to believe that this might just be the best *BlazBlue* yet. From a mechanical perspective, at least – only an extensive field test will reveal whether the balancing is up to snuff, and even then, Arc is already readying the first wave of tweaks. A fine fighter, and it's frankly ludicrous how excited we are for the new *Guilty Gear* because of how awesome it is...

Luke Albigés

VERDICT

Chrono Phantasma is a fighter we implore any genre fans to import. It's more approachable, while the improvements only add to the depth. Buy it, learn it, love it.

91%



"IT'S ALL ABOUT TORTURING FOES WITH SPIKE-COVERED RUBE GOLDBERG MACHINES"

Deception IV: Blood Ties

Dealing with intruders? There's a trap for that



WE LIKE TO think we're pretty clued up when it comes to PlayStation gaming. But when something like this falls onto our desks and we're left wondering what happened to the first three *Deception* games, our confidence waivers. We've got a half-decent excuse this time around though – the franchise goes by about three different names and only one of the previous games came out in Europe, as well as PS2 spin-off *Trapt* which we've only just remembered even exists. By all accounts, we didn't miss much, either. Middling reviews and technical issues ended up holding the innovative games back and while *Blood Ties* still has its fair share of problems, it's an interesting concept in today's markets of extremes – big-budget triple-A follow-the-man-'em-ups and simple low-key indies – to warrant a look.

Deception is kind of hard to explain, which makes sense as it's also kind of hard to play. The principle is simple

enough – you, the devil's daughter, find yourself trapped in a series of multi-part maps and invaded by waves of enemies, with your only form of defence the ability to lay traps in the environment. These come in two lots of three flavours, with hazards able to emerge from walls, floors or the ceiling and falling into one distinct category: humiliating, sadistic or elaborate. While many of the early maps can be cleared simply by spamming one quick and basic trap, doing so is the equivalent of playing through *Devil May Cry* only using the guns – inefficient, boring and entirely missing the point.

You see, the real thrill here comes from setting up and executing elaborate chain reactions that employ your own traps as well as those handily built into the environment. It's all about torturing foes with spike-covered Rube Goldberg machines and, handily, the game pauses while you switch to a grid-based overview of the room so you can take your time and make the most of every step of this process. Score bonuses can

be accrued by using multiple traps of the same category in one long combo and while this can be hard to make use of in the early stages when only a handful of devices are unlocked, clever play will quickly see you earn enough cash to broaden your perverse horizons.

That early part of the game is by far the weakest – it's not just the modest arsenal of traps that frustrates but also both the pathetic number that can be laid at once, plus the fact that an extended tutorial manages to walk you through specific combos (often twice) without really explaining how or why things work as they do. Experimentation is part of the fun to be fair, although it's not until you can place a decent number of traps that this really comes to the fore. The same trial and error approach applies to the armoured enemies, where you need to find and exploit each of the opponent's weak points in one combo then send them flying to shatter their protection and leave them exposed to your full arsenal. Armour tends to negate

DETAILS

PUBLISHER

Tecmo Koei

DEVELOPER

Tecmo Koei

RELEASE DATE

Out Now

PRICE

£29.99

PLAYERS

1

AGE RATING

16+

TWITTER

@TecmoKoeiEurope

INSTALL SIZE

690Mb

Trophies 41





△○×□ Traps can even interact with one another. Roll a boulder down a staircase, for instance, and you can shove it on or catapult it back up with another trap.



△○×□ Getting your ass kicked? There's an auto-evasion skill you can use to make the game easier, but your rewards are halved.



certain trap types, though, making clever use of all your tools crucial.

But even landing the crucial first hit can be tough, especially considering smarter foes will tend to avoid many of your bladed gambits. Each must be activated manually, which you can't do if you're taking damage or, heaven forbid, manage to combo yourself. And with limited defensive options aside from traps and virtually no protection offered by the heroine's skimpy outfit, not every combo will play out fully and often, failing to accept that and retreat accordingly will get you killed. It's a tough game (which is probably why there's an auto-evade option – an 'easy mode' of sorts) and while setting up the same contraption for a tenth time after a bunch of deaths isn't exactly fun, the sense of reward when you finally hit the full sequence is entirely worth the stress.

Deception IV is a celebration of the exhibition combo, those impractical yet impressive strings of attacks fighting experts throw together in combo videos

paraphrased here with bonkers chain reactions of spikes, boulders, bombs and banana peels. The emphasis on trial and error won't be to everyone's taste and the camera can still be a pain in the ass (a series staple). But in those moments where bothersome good guys are thrown through a perfectly executed trap loop until they keel over, all of the game's problems fade away and you're left cackling maniacally at your Vita while everyone else on the bus glares at you like you're some kind of sadistic lunatic. Which, to be fair, you kind of have to be to fully enjoy this devious gaming oddity.

Luke Albigés

VERDICT

Fiddly and tricky it may be, but the smug sense of satisfaction you get after executing a perfect trap combo makes all the nonsense worthwhile. An entertaining and original diversion.

78%



△○×□ Three demonic advisors will offer additional tasks and challenges, with healthy rewards for meeting their demands.



REVIEW ROUND-UP

THERE'S PERHAPS NO greater joy in all of gaming than a heated local multiplayer session, so it's really sad to see this once great gaming pillar crumble as it has over the last few years. Developers pour so much into visuals that they never seem to want to compromise on fidelity in order to facilitate split-screen multiplayer. That's another gap in the market for indies to throw themselves at, then, which is exactly what **TOWERFALL ASCENSION [1]** does. And to our mind, there's no purer local multiplayer experience on PS4.

It's a gloriously simple concept – stick up to four archers in an arena, give them a couple of arrows each and make them fight to the death. One well-placed arrow is all it takes to end a life (or a cheeky head stomp will do the same trick) but a deft dodge can claim incoming arrows, so it's a fast-paced, reaction-heavy showdown where clever use of both your limited tools and environmental gimmicks is key. Cunning players will learn to use the screen wrap (people or objects that leave the left side of the screen emerge on the right and vice versa, same for top

and bottom) to set horrible pincer traps and launch surprise attacks – it feels a lot like lobbing a primed bomb over the arena wall in *Bomberman*, which is fine with us. There are tough time trials and a campaign of sorts for solo players, but nothing substantial. If you're never likely to play local multiplayer with friends (there's no online play, sadly) then there's nothing for you here. But if there's any danger of you sitting down with a few mates to play some PS4, we'd argue that this addictive slice of arcade purity is absolutely

“ONE WELL-PLACED ARROW OR HEAD STOMP IS ALL IT TAKES TO END A LIFE”

essential. Don't forget that you can use Vita as an extra controller via Remote Play (pro tip: use the D-pad, as the tiny analog sticks can cost you accuracy) to bump up the numbers, as this only gets better the more people get involved.

At the other end of the spectrum sits **BASEMENT CRAWL [2]**, which might just be the *worst* game on PS4. It's a

△○×□ It doesn't help *Basement Crawl's* case that it's ugly as sin. It has the dubious honour of being the first PS4 game we ever deleted.



△○×□ Learning your angles is a crucial early skill to master, although paying attention to the power-ups everyone else is rocking is also pretty important.

grotty *Bomberman* clone with the same multiplayer emphasis as *Towerfall* but without the smarts to make it work. There's absolutely no single-player component (not even bots you can learn the mechanics against) so you've no choice but to dive straight into multiplayer. Locally, this is just a bit dull – it's just a bad version of *Bomberman* – but try to play online and you're in for a shock. The net code is abysmal to the point where lag makes it absolutely unplayable. In our first game, we were killed by an explosion that didn't happen before our first bomb could even appear on-screen, despite having spanked the relevant button long before. Not exactly the best of first impressions. It never got any better either, so we'll probably never play it again. Especially when *Towerfall* fills the same *Bomberman*-shaped gap with far greater finesse. As in, any at all.



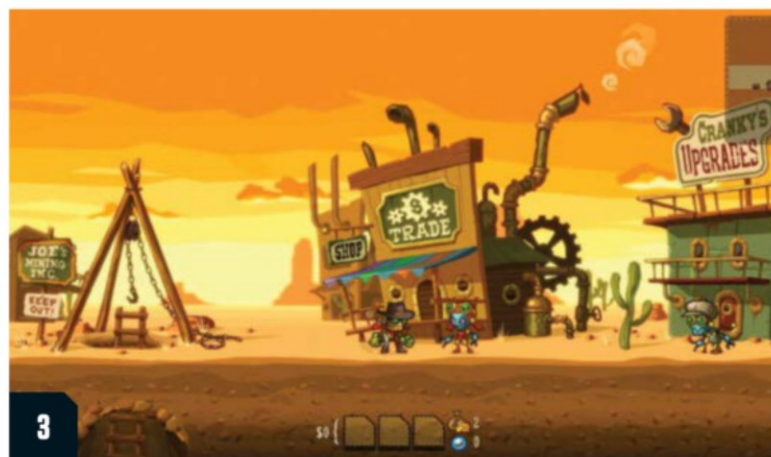


Don't worry, solo gamers – we haven't forgotten you in our sudden celebration of local multiplayer. For you guys, **STEAMWORLD DIG [3]** is something that you might... well, dig. It's an awesome fusion of procedurally generated subterranea to mine and Metroidvania structure to unlocking upgrades and new powers. You'd never know that this started out as a 3DS game, as it looks awesome on both PS4 and Vita, the chunky cartoon style working equally well on both platforms. We seem to be doing quite a lot of mining lately – be it grinding to level 50 in *FFXIV* or slapping pixelated walls for resources in *Minecraft* – but this is easily the most fun we've had tunnelling in ages and by the time you reach the deepest depths,

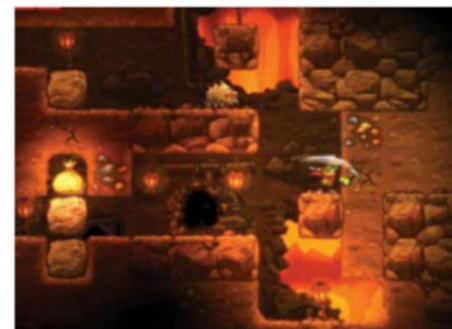


you'll feel like the most badass miner there ever was. There's no Platinum, sadly, but the Trophy list is interesting all the same, offering plenty of challenges. Perfectly suited to a brief play session while on the bus or waiting for a download or install to complete, we can't sing the praises of this game enough. Then again, we do seem to love mining. Not sure what all that's about. We blame *Mr Driller*.

If you're in the market for something a little more involved, you could always give **ATELIER ESCHA & LOGY: ALCHEMISTS OF THE DUSK SKY [4]** a crack, but be warned – like the rest of the *Atelier* games, it's an acquired taste. The core alchemy mechanics are as tight as ever, with all kinds of ingredients available to tweak and perfect your recipes and loads of nuances to discover. If you weren't keen on the kind of life sim approach of the last few



△○×□ Upgrades come thick and fast, meaning there's always some cool new toy just around the corner...



games, there's good news – the two titular characters offer unique gameplay styles, so squeaky airhead Escha has most of the time management, conversations and alchemy to do while impossibly handsome new kid on the block Logy's adventure plays more like a traditional JRPG, with dungeons to grind and loot to hoard. Production values are typically low but there's enough here to keep you going for weeks. Well, so long as you like non-sequitur, PS2 visuals, anime stereotypes, flouncy outfits and accidental comedy...

△○×□ Quick, hurry! There are only 119 left!





PUBLISHER EIDOS

PLAY SCORE 94%

METACRITIC SCORE 90/100

FORMAT PLAYSTATION 2

RELEASE DATE 9 OCTOBER 2002

DEVELOPER FREE RADICAL

The Making Of... TIMESPLITTERS 2

Ed Smith tracks down the team to revisit one of the best multiplayer shooters ever made



△○×□ The sense of fun seems strange by today's standards. Hell, we're not even sure you even were forced to follow this guy once...

Whether you played it or not, when you look back at *TimeSplitters 2*, it's hard not to feel nostalgic. A fast-paced sci-fi game with a huge cast of characters created by a team of just 30 people, it represents a style of first-person shooter that in recent years has gone out of fashion.

Entire companies are now dependent on games like *Call Of Duty* and *Battlefield* and, as such, the margin for experimentation is practically zero. Since the success of *Call Of Duty 4* in 2007, FPS publishers have been following suit. Humourlessness, realism and semi-simulations of the second Gulf War have dominated shooters for the past six years. And with so much money involved – so much quality and content now expected each year – personality and experimentation have been slowly squeezed out. *TimeSplitters 2* isn't just an example of first-person shooters gone by; it's a relic of a different type of games industry, when there wasn't so much at stake and a loose team of game-makers could be allowed to run with their ideas.

"The publisher, Eidos, were very hands-off compared to most of the publishers I've experienced," explains Joe Moulding, the senior programmer responsible for *TimeSplitters 2*'s weapons. "This allowed us to be very flexible. Whereas most games are designed to re-use

assets as much as possible, every level in *TimeSplitters* was from a different time period, so needed new characters, weapons and scenery. It made a lot of work for our artists but was definitely worth the effort."

Variety was at the heart of *TimeSplitters 2*. Created by members of the team that developed *GoldenEye 007*, the first FPS game to introduce objectives that changed with each level, it thrived on consistently offering players new things to look at and do. The single-player campaign was a masterclass in pacing. Whereas today you can rely on a sand level, a stealth level and a vehicle level, *TimeSplitters 2* transported you from the Wild West to Thirties Chicago to a futuristic vision of Tokyo. In the best possible sense, it was all over the place. Your weapons, goals and characters changed with each new section and you genuinely never felt like you were doing the same thing twice.

"I think some of the big shooter franchises have been playing it a bit too safe recently," continues Moulding in earnest. "They keep adding new content, but not new experiences."

That stagnation, says Steve Ellis, one of the *TimeSplitters* directors, is a result of improved and more complex technology. As games have become more sophisticated, they've also become harder to build, with character and background



renders requiring a lot more work. Like the crystals players collect in each of its missions, *TimeSplitters 2* truly is an artefact from a different point in history, when games were simpler to create.

"Developers can't create characters in a day or two any more," says Ellis. "These days it takes a month or more, and the

screen mode was *TimeSplitters 2*. Pre-dating *COD*, *Battlefield* and *Gears Of War*, it was the first truly big console multiplayer game of the 21st Century.

Like the campaign mode, *TimeSplitters 2*'s multiplayer was impossible to predict. There was madness in every direction. Tactics, really,

△○×□ Single-player was daft and relatively throwaway, but it didn't matter – multiplayer was always the game's focus.

"I THINK SOME OF THE BIG SHOOTER FRANCHISE HAVE BEEN PLAYING IT A BIT TOO SAFE RECENTLY..."

only way to save time is to use cut and paste a lot and make characters that are derivatives of each other. It's no longer economically viable to create a huge array of distinct characters. The same applies to background.

"We were doing something that was genuinely different, filling a gap that nothing else was filling. In the time since *TimeSplitters 3*, it feels like that gap has opened up again."

Another thing that has changed drastically since *TimeSplitters 2* is multiplayer. *GoldenEye* set the standard – simple, local, varied – and *TimeSplitters* refined the formula, adding new game modes, customisable weapon sets and faster pacing. For a lot of people, split-

didn't apply. There were no strict vantage points, no places to camp, no weapons that were completely better than the others. Rather than cling to any tried and tested methods, it encouraged players to get on the field, to experiment with new things. In some matches, discretion and accurate weapons would be best suited. In others, suicidal charges with dual Tommy Guns would work better. Certain game modes didn't necessarily mix better with certain maps. Every combination of abilities, guns and objectives could be



BLUFFER'S GUIDE

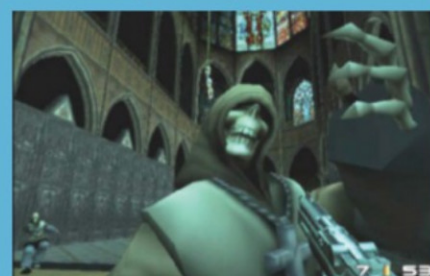
Everything you need to know in five facts



1 Fast-paced, ultra stylised sci-fi shooter made by the *GoldenEye* and *Perfect Dark* team.



2 Endless multiplayer, complete with huge array of characters, weapons, maps and modes.



3 Enormously varied single-player campaign with levels taking place across history.



4 Slick, seamless and bug free. Tested the limits of the PlayStation 2 hardware.



5 As fresh and playable today as ever. A change of pace from modern, gritty war shooters.



△○×□ Each time period came with its own arsenal, from tommy guns to laser rifles.



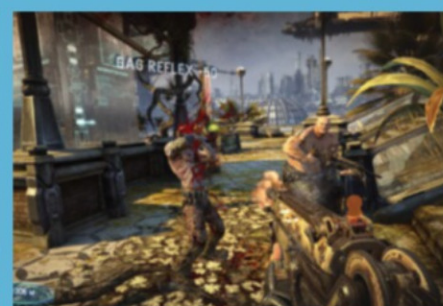
△○×□ Finishing levels would unlock key characters for multiplayer deathmatches.

FURTHER READING



OLDER – TimeSplitters

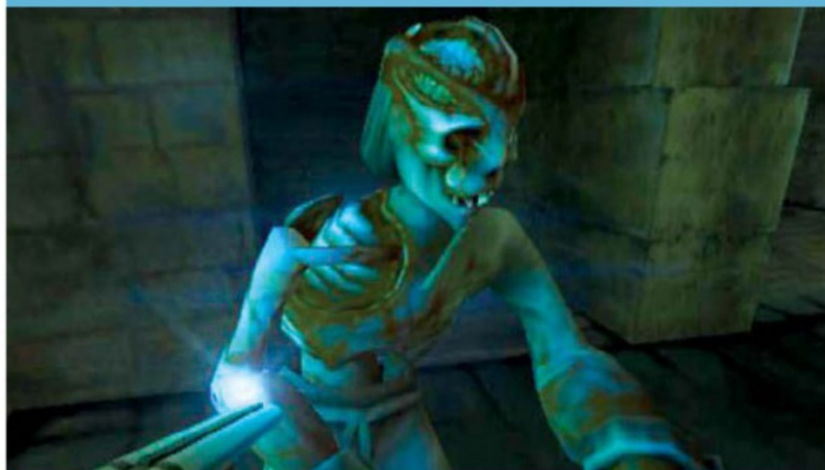
Not as full or varied as the sequel, but a great shooter nonetheless, especially for a PS2 launch title. You can see where the ideas all started, plus the franchise's focus on multiplayer is clear even here.



NEWER – Bulletstorm

Like *TimeSplitters*, a fun, colourful counterpoint to the FPS norms, filled with belly laughs, big characters and silly guns. One of the most immature games you're ever likely to play, but hey, we're not complaining.

STANDOUT MOMENT



Ack, zombies! Siberia, the first level of *TimeSplitters 2*, is a close copy of the opening level of *GoldenEye*. They both take place on a dam, both see you starting with a silenced pistol and both have objectives that involve disabling alarm systems. But it's all a ruse. Towards the end of the

Siberia section, without warning, zombies break loose, turning a typical FPS mission into a schlocky scene of survival-horror. It was a perfect illustration of how *TimeSplitters 2* wrong-footed your expectations. That creative, surprising streak ran through the entire game, too.

applied to each of the game's levels, with differing, but always enjoyable results.

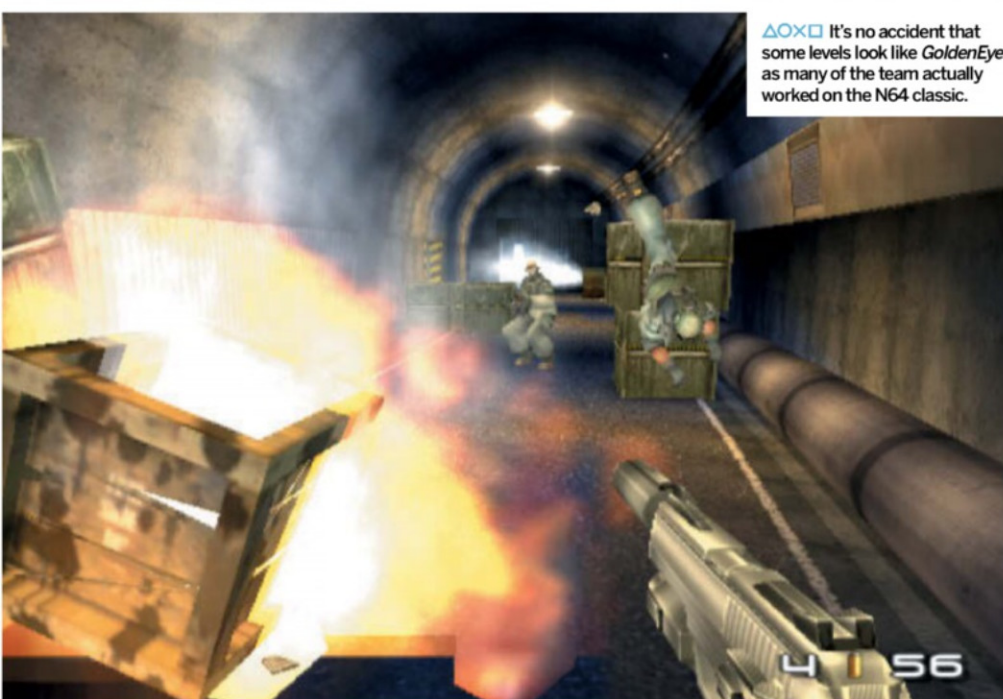
Though it had no character level-up systems it was, truly, endless. Without perks or kill-streak rewards, *TimeSplitters 2* still felt fresh with every deathmatch. It was slick, too: no bugs, no frame rate drops, no clunky UI. As well as creatively standing out from FPS games before and after, *TimeSplitters 2*, for its time, was a technical marvel.

There are two key things that multiplayer shooters need to get right, explains Ellis. "First, the controls. It's not just about which button or stick does what. Turn speeds, movement speeds and gun parameters all need to be spot on. Details matter. Second, keep the frame rate as high as possible. We always felt that *GoldenEye* was let down by its low frame rate, so one of the first things that we did was to work out roughly what we could get out of the PS2 then set up strict polygon budgets for characters, backgrounds, etc to ensure that we could keep a high frame rate. Personally, I also prefer it when

everyone playing is in the same room, but online play brings in a larger audience."

At this point especially, it's hard not to get a bit ranty, a bit cantankerous, about *TimeSplitters 2*. It's a common gripe, and an easy bit of rhetoric for stirring up old-school gamers, but seriously, what happened to local multiplayer? Anyone who owned a PlayStation 2 will remember an evening spent in front of *TimeSplitters*. It was so good. More than any chat on teamspeak, any activity shared over PSN, it was a social experience. And now, just over ten years later, games like it are no longer being produced. Multiplayer today is a paradoxical experience where although people are playing together, they're each isolated, fighting over weapon drops, communicating via headsets.

And that, looking back at *TimeSplitters 2*, is an enormous pity. Think of Ice Station, Mexican Mission and Hangar. Think of zombie mode, the Electrotool and that annoying ruddy monkey. *TimeSplitters* was an infinitely colourful and energetic shooter, driven by an unwillingness to



△×□ It's no accident that some levels look like *GoldenEye* as many of the team actually worked on the N64 classic.

play things safe and a small team of creatives who were all allowed to have input. Truly, it was a hell of a game. Even today – especially today – it feels fresh and inventive.

"There was a deliberate effort to distinguish it from the other FPS games of the time," concludes Moulding. "Some

be different. It was all about variety and choice. It was a sandbox for you to play in as you chose. I'd like to work on something like it again. It wouldn't necessarily need to be *TimeSplitters*, but something with the core values of *TimeSplitters* would be fun."

Perhaps it's coming. Perhaps this wave of war-shooters is about to break

"THERE WAS A DELIBERATE EFFORT TO DISTINGUISH IT FROM OTHER FPS GAMES"

of the coolest features weren't planned ahead, but someone on the team would try out their own little idea and if it was fun then we'd find a way to incorporate it. Everyone, if they wanted, was able to impact the design."

"Personally I consider myself lucky to have had the opportunity to work on the games that I have," says Ellis. "The *TimeSplitters* games were exactly what I wanted to be working on. It didn't conform to the norms of the genre. It wanted to

and roll back. But until that happens, *TimeSplitters 2* remains the best example of an original, daring FPS game. It launched at a time when *Medal Of Honor* was king, when the World War Two sim was 'what people wanted'. If *TimeSplitters 2* was able to break out back then, then maybe – hopefully – something just as bold is brewing right now. Lord knows FPS games could use some new direction. *TimeSplitters 2*, as fresh today as it ever was, is the perfect roadmap.



BEST WEAPON

Your foes will be bricking it

TimeSplitters 2 had a huge weapon arsenal, comprising everything from six-shooters to laser guns. But for our money, the best option was the brick. Not because it was powerful, not because it was easy to use, but because it was funny. Nothing beat playing multiplayer on one-shot mode and watching your mate go flying backwards after you'd pinged him in the dome with your trusty brick. It was fun to take a sci-fi shooter, filled with homing missiles and proximity mines, and turn it into the deathmatch equivalent of a fight in a pub car park. Long live the brick.

INTERVIEW

TROY BAKER

What does a videogame actor actually do?

Responsible for *The Last Of Us's* Joel and *inFamous: Second Son's* Delsin, Troy Baker is possibly the most in-demand actor in videogames today. He sat down with us to discuss character, direction and videogame maturity

Given that you don't always know how the gameplay is going to work before you record voiceovers, do you ever have any issues getting into a character?

The most important thing is that you begin with a very, very clear concept of what the character is and what their goals are. At the very outset of *inFamous: Second Son* Travis Willingham – who plays Delsin's brother Reggie – and I went to Sucker Punch and spent the weekend with [game director] Nate Fox. All we did in that time was discuss the specific beats of the story, what they wanted to tell with the game and understand the relationship between the brothers.

Through discovering those goals and those relationships, Travis and I found key anchors we could use to pin these characters down. That allows you, once you set foot on the stage, to be in character to such a point that you understand their decisions.

So, you're still surprised when you see the character in the game, you're like 'okay... so *that's* how it really looks in the game'. However, you're not necessarily surprised by their actions and how what you've recorded is used because you understand the character so well by that point.

Do you always make a point of building that rapport with your fellow actors?

I try to as much as I can, yeah. It varies, though... sometimes all

you can do is say 'Hi, I'm Troy. I'll be killing you on stage today, so let's get on with it'. Because we're seeing performances in games not only rival but, in some ways, surpass what we've seen in TV and film (depending on the quality of the show or movie), it means that trust is such an important thing now. You need to trust those people you're working with completely and I'm constantly working on my humility and putting my trust in other people.

Sometimes you have lots of time to build that trust and sometimes you only have a little time, so I think it's



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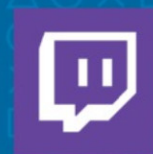
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AOX The (in)famously cocky and unlikeable Delsin Rowe. Nice beanie, man.

really on you as the actor to make sure that you're comfortable and confident enough in your preparations to do the character you're playing justice.

Is more trust needed with videogames than live-action films because you don't always know how the game is going to look at the end of production?

That's a great question [laughs], I don't think I've been asked that. In TV and films there's a lot of trust due to what happens in the editing room – sometimes the movie that was shot is better than the one that got put out, and sometimes the final movie is better than the one that was shot. And that's all down to good or bad editing.

With games, though, so much of it is theatre of the mind because you're putting a lot of trust in this new technology that is going to take what you've done as an actor and make a game out of it. You have to trust that the tech and the people running it are going to capture the nuances of your performance, and it's not until you start seeing yourself in the game that you know whether or not it all worked out.

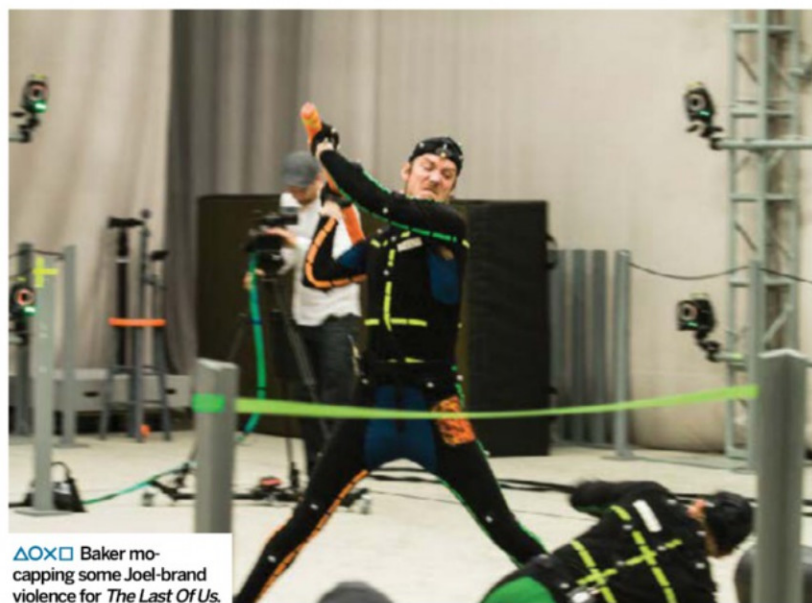
I don't know if game acting requires you to commit *more* trust than television or film, but it certainly takes as much trust.

The Last Of Us director Neil Druckmann has spoken about how he likes his actors to ad lib. Have you found that that is the case for most directors?

In my experience, and this might not be across the board, game directors are looking for collaborative partners that they can bring into the creative process to help them achieve their goals. That makes their job easier and it makes my job easier. Having an open door policy like we had at Sucker Punch of setting aside any ego and allowing us to explore these characters together does result in you getting closer to the best story possible.

With *Second Son* establishing a new character in the world of *inFamous*, there were a lot of questions we had to ask ourselves about Delsin and there were a lot of new elements that we found we could explore through our answers to those questions.

Travis and I would often read the script as we were asked to, but then we would start looking at what existed in the white between the black and started exploring outside of the words on the page. As long as what we were doing and saying serves the overall intentions of the scene then we're given freedom to convey the thought in our way.



AOX Baker mopping some Joel-brand violence for *The Last Of Us*.

Games are often seen by many as immature compared to other mediums. Is that changing?

Yeah, I definitely think that's changing. When you look at what's happening with modern games and you examine the response the culture is having to that change then I think we're past the point of games being inferior.

Games like *The Last Of Us*, *BioShock* and *The Walking Dead* are proof that people are recognising how incredible games can be at delivering a narrative in an interesting and mature way. We're well past games being a second-rate medium for storytelling, yeah.



EXTENDED PLAY

DARK SOULS

What are you doing playing Dark Souls II? You're not nearly done with the first game yet! Sure, you've seen the credits, but that's pretty much where Dark Souls gets going properly. You should probably head back to Lordran...



ONEBRO RUN (CHALLENGE)

■ IF YOU'RE **HARDCORE** into *Dark Souls*, you're probably aware of the OneBro phenomenon – the idea that you can take a level one character all the way from creation to credits. But here's the kicker – the only class that doesn't start out above level one is the Deprived, so you have to start with nothing and go from there. Gear requirements mean that your perpetually basic

stats prohibit anything but the most basic weapons, so expect boss fights to take ages – without perfect roll timing, you'll never earn the title of OneBro. If you even want it, that is. Hats off to you if you have the patience for this excruciating challenge, and you can keep the damn hat if you manage to finish the game without ever levelling up.

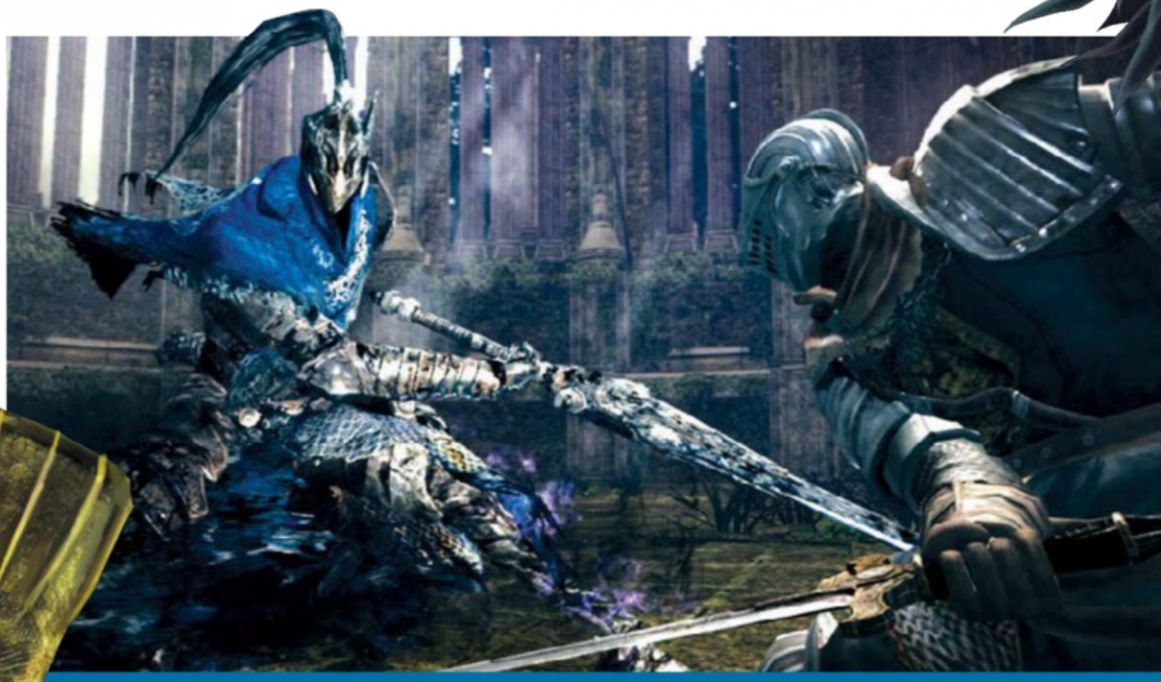




NO BONFIRES (SUICIDE)

■ A ONEBRO RUN is one thing, but this is the next level of insanity – try to finish the entire game without resting at a single bonfire. While you can at least pick a class other than Deprived so you have *some* starting stats, the very fact that any and every death will send you all the way back to Firelink Shrine makes this a hugely daunting prospect. It has, however, been done – Twitch *Dark Souls* legend benderofx has finished this and numerous other

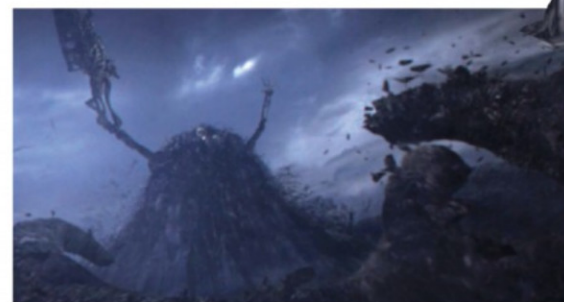
challenges – but you can make it a little more realistic by allowing limited bonfire use, such as only those that you can warp between later in the game. If you think you've done everything in *Dark Souls*, think again – this challenge is one that only the best of the best can ever hope to beat. Imagining the long walk from Firelink to Anor Londo every time you die is terrifying...



ARTORIAS OF THE ABYSS (DLC)

■ ONE OF THE most common complaints about *Dark Souls* was that it was just a bit easy. Sarcasm aside, From Software's sole DLC package for the game somehow managed to find a way to make the game even harder, adding in some gruelling boss battles that make even the core game's toughest fights seem simple by comparison. There's a surprising amount of

content here too – six new areas, four horrible bosses and loads of awesome new gear – so it's definitely worth the money. In our opinion though, the best addition was clearly the inclusion of carvings – unlimited use items that let you use basic chat phrases in a comically booming voice. Shouting at invaders never gets old, and it serves the treacherous bastards right.



COVENANTS (ONLINE)

■ IT'S ENTIRELY POSSIBLE to play through *Dark Souls* without stumbling upon even a single one of the game's nine Covenants, although the amount these add to the multiplayer side of the game should not be underestimated. Each offers a different twist on competitive or cooperative play – Darkwraith, for instance, is all about invading others to kill the host player while Forest Hunters can be called into other players' games to defend the area from intruders. There's a cool mix of options and however devious (Gravelord Servant) or helpful (Way Of White) you feel like being, there's a group of likeminded players you can join. Just don't abandon or otherwise wrong your Covenant – there's another group dedicated to hunting down and killing listed sinners. Gulp.

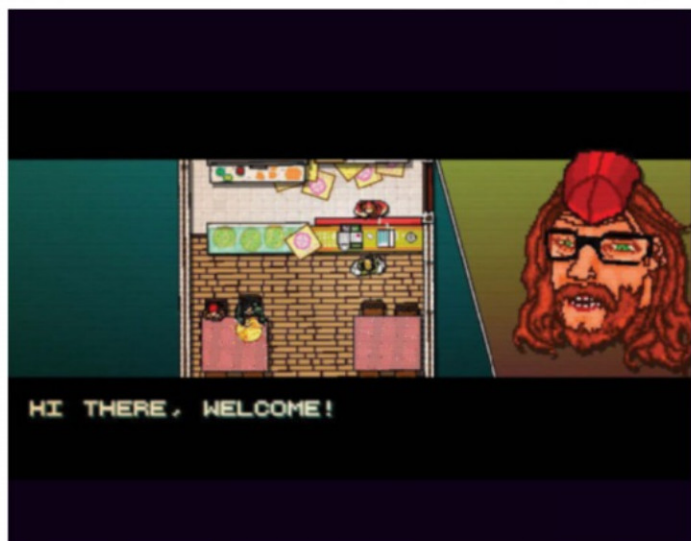
TROPHY GUIDE

PS PLUS

TROPHY GUIDE

APRIL

A new month and another swathe of great titles for PS4, PS3 and PS Vita owners: *Mercenary Kings* for the PS4, *Sly Cooper: Thieves In Time* for PS3 and PS Vita (it's Cross-Buy), the outstanding *Hotline Miami* (again for both PS3 and PS Vita with Cross-Buy), *Pro Evolution Soccer 2014* for PS3 and finally *MotoGP 13* for PS Vita. There's a little bit of everything this month, and it's all bloody good. But what about those shiny Trophies? As always, we've got your back...



MERCENARY KINGS

PLATFORM: PS4 **DIFFICULTY:** 3/5 **TROPHIES:** 26 1 7 9 9

■ **FINALLY WE'RE GETTING** some PS4 games offered in PS Plus that come with Platinums; sure it's still an indie game, but it's a pretty good one. Think *Metal Slug* crossed with *Borderlands*. As you might expect from such a comparison, the Trophies for *Mercenary Kings* are mostly grind-based – kill 10,000 enemies, earn \$1,000,000, that sort of thing – and as such most will unlock as you play over extended periods of time. Which you can also do with friends in co-op. Splendid.

There are some interesting Trophies to look out for, however. 'Blastfighter', for example, requires completing a mission with a SWAT-12 weapon kitted out with every part – self-explanatory really. 'Denied' requires killing a boss before it can escape, and though this will likely come as part of natural play you can always try the Steel Soldier mission once you've bought a few good gun upgrades. 'Untouchable' – which requires completing a mission without getting hit – is easy once you know a level enough, but the early hunting mission where you simply have to recover two animal pelts from creatures that don't even fight back makes this task much easier. Apart from playing the game in co-op and reviving someone ten times for 'Medic', there isn't much more to the *Mercenary Kings* Platinum.



SLY COOPER: THIEVES IN TIME

PLATFORM: PS3 & PS VITA **DIFFICULTY:** 2/5 **TROPHIES:** 50 1 3 5 41

■ **THERE ARE A** lot of automatically-unlocked campaign Trophies for *Sly Cooper*, but as you might have already figured it will be the collectables that form a large portion of your time with the game. There's not much to add on that front except to say that the Clockwerk unlockable upgrades can make collectables appear on the map, removing a large portion of the hassle. You'll also need to pickpocket three different items from the hub areas of each era (there are only three possible types to get in each) for 'Hassan Would Be Proud'. It's also worth remembering you can unlock 'The Cooper Open' by hitting a 20-hit minimum rally in the tennis mini-game in each era's hideout – worth remembering to tick off as you enter each new zone.

There's actually a selection of other event-specific Trophies available to collect, too, such as 'Apollo Wins', 'Get To the Chopper', 'Cheers' and 'Hubba Hubba' – check the description for the full Trophy list for specific requirements, but you can replay any mission at any time so you don't need to worry too much about missing anything. There's nothing too taxing in there anyway.



HOTLINE MIAMI

PLATFORM: PS VITA

DIFFICULTY: 3/5

TROPHIES: 35 1 5 11 18

■ **WHILE** *HOTLINE MIAMI* is a fantastic game, it does only have one Trophy list so there's no scabbing a second free Platinum here. There's a surprising amount to earning that Platinum, from collecting every mask and hidden letter in each stage, to scoring A+ on every level. Getting that score can be tricky, however, so here some tips: completing levels faster will boost your ranking; combos are also important; melee weapons like knives are ideal.

There are some other Trophies that require specific situations to be encountered – such as completing stages barehanded – but the trickier ones are hidden events. 'Plain Luck' needs you to locate three enemies grouped closely together to use a weapon – like a pool cue – to knock them all out in a single throw, while the crocodile for 'Sewer Alligator' can be found when being told to "Go To The Car" – instead, pick up a crowbar and walk around the house to a manhole to open it and go inside. Job done.



PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2014

PLATFORM: PS3 **DIFFICULTY:** 1/5 **TROPHIES:** 33 1 4 13 15

■ **BY FAR THE** easiest collection on the list, and though there are a handful of challenges to tick off you'll ultimately get the Platinum just by completing various cups and leagues. This will require playing both Exhibition, Become A Legend and Master League modes, as well as ticking off all the challenges in Performance Training. You'll need to become good at the game, obviously, but there's nothing here that's really going to be a struggle, or even confuse. Enjoy the football, enjoy your new Platinum.



MOTOGP 13

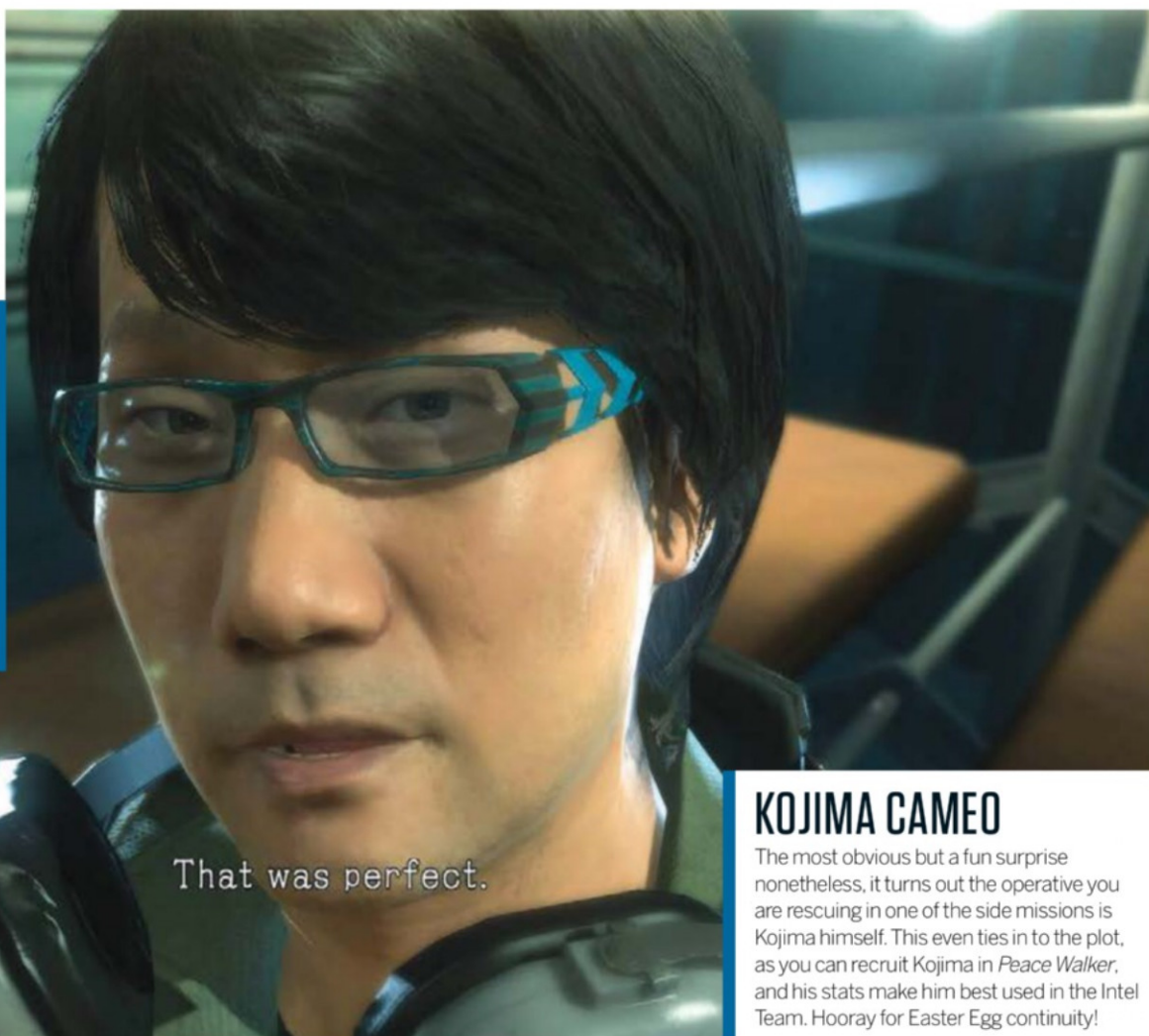
PLATFORM: VITA **DIFFICULTY:** 1/5

TROPHIES: 51 1 2 10 38

■ **MUCH LIKE** PES 2014, there isn't much of note to say about *MotoGP 13*'s Trophy list. There are loads of Trophies to collect, but most of them are cumulative or fairly self-explanatory, and even still may not have to try very hard to get them. 'Texas Terror' requires winning (coming in first) with B Spies, who is unlocked once you reach GP level 56. As B Spies, simply win a race at Austin and the Trophy is yours. Apart from that, there's very little to be too concerned about here; most of the Trophies are unlocked just for entering menus for the first time. Simple.

Ground Zeroes Easter Eggs

Metal Gear Solid V: Ground Zeroes is out now and, unsurprisingly, has been stuffed full of secrets and Easter Eggs by that crazy genius, Hideo Kojima. Here are seven of the best, but bear in mind that spoilers will follow. If you want to find these yourself, be careful!



That was perfect.

KOJIMA CAMEO

The most obvious but a fun surprise nonetheless, it turns out the operative you are rescuing in one of the side missions is Kojima himself. This even ties in to the plot, as you can recruit Kojima in *Peace Walker*, and his stats make him best used in the Intel Team. Hooray for Easter Egg continuity!



MOVE THE CAMERA IN CUT-SCENES

This won't be much of a surprise to *MGS* fans, but holding R2 will zoom the camera in slightly during cut-scenes, and moving the right stick around while doing so will move the camera itself. In past *Metal Gear* games there have been secrets to discover via this method, and while we haven't found any yet, there must be something buried in there...

MGS1 SKINS

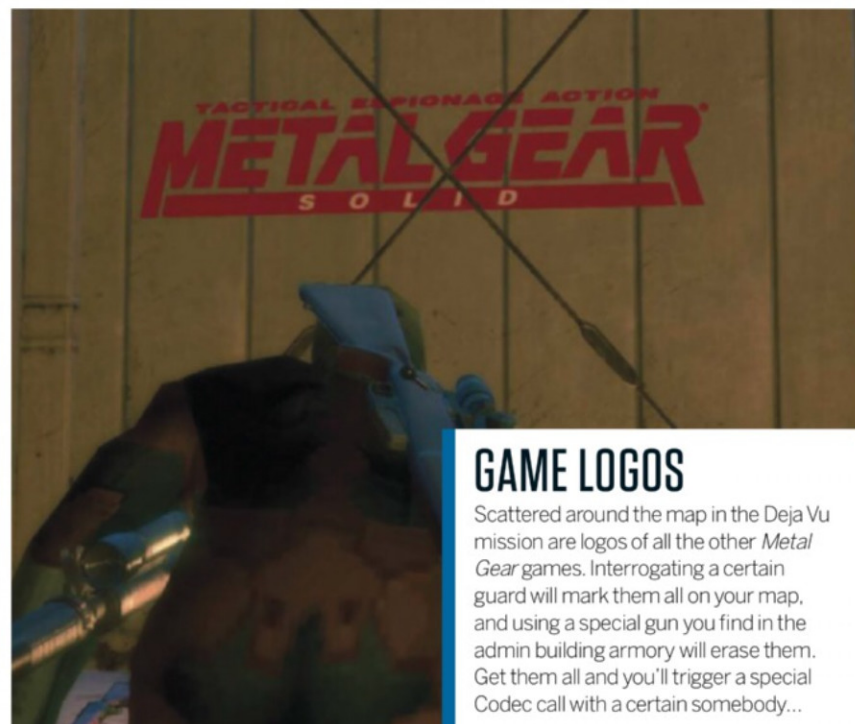
The Deja Vu mission is basically one huge Easter Egg, tasking you with recreating scenes from the original *MGS*. Do them all and you'll unlock a bonus quiz on the game. Get all these questions right and you'll unlock the ability to replay the mission as the Solid Snake model from the original game! Not only that, this causes snow to fall and the enemy troops to be replaced with genome soldiers. Do it again and you unlock Grey Fox, the original Cyborg Ninja.





OLD MUSIC

Once again in the Deja Vu mission (starting to see a theme?) there is a hidden tape in a small cave near where you rescue Chico. This tape contains two pieces of music – one from *Metal Gear Solid*, one from the original *Metal Gear* on MSX. Neato!



FOXIE??!?!?

Our favourite, primarily because it's the most ridiculous of the lot and perfectly exemplifies the series' disregard for the fourth wall. Play the Deja Vu mission as classic Snake and go to where you would rescue Chico and Paz, to find them replaced by the DARPA Chief and the Armstech president Kenneth Baker from *Metal Gear Solid*. Find them both, let the Foxdie virus take its course, and wait for the virus to try to infect the Fox Engine itself! We won't spoil it for you, but things get pretty... well, psychedelic is probably the best word for it. Radical, dude!

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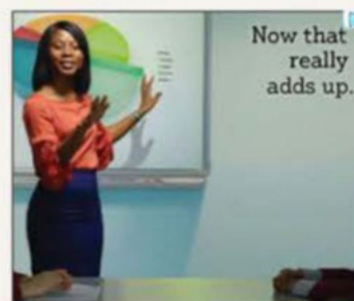
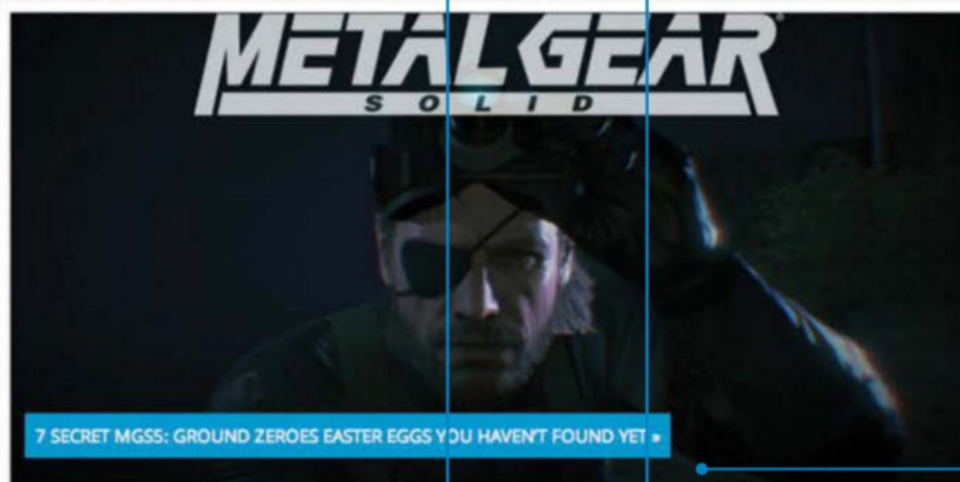
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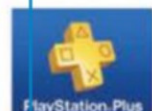


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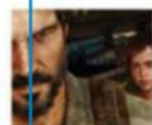
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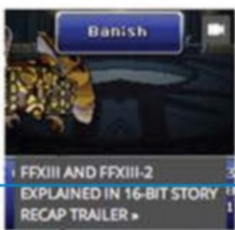
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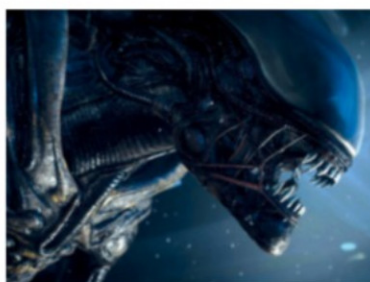
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WOLFENSTEIN: THE NEW ORDER
JUST SAY NO TO NAZIS



ALIEN: ISOLATION
BETTER LATE THAN NEVER



BATMAN: ARKHAM KNIGHT
THE HERO PS4 NEEDS



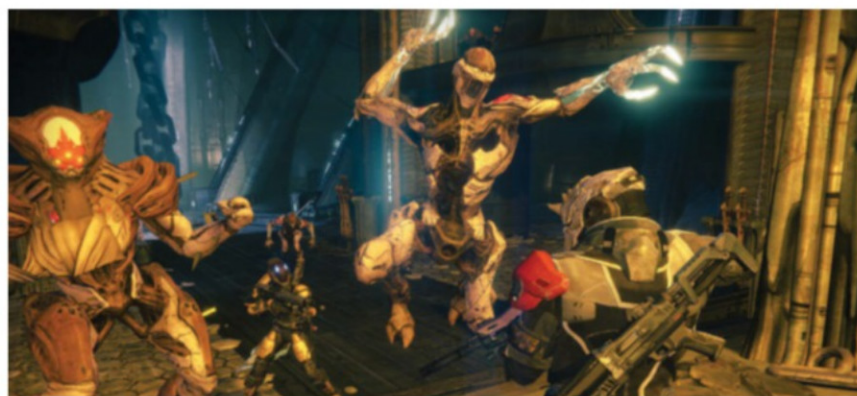
GUILTY GEAR XRD -SIGN-
GET READY TO ROCK...



FINAL FANTASY XV
EMO HAIR AND GIANT SWORDS



THE ELDER SCROLLS ONLINE
SKYRIMMO?



DESTINY
CAN WE HAVE IT NOW PLEASE?

twitch LIVE GAMEPLAY STREAMING

Join the **Play** team for live streaming events and shared gameplay

twitch.tv/PlayUK

TOURNAMENTS!

Over the coming months we plan on running a series of tournaments over various games, with prizes for the best players. These prizes will probably be games, but may also take the forms of t-shirts, books or whatever other assorted tat we have lying around. Make sure you keep an eye on our Twitter, Facebook and Twitch channels for your own chance to join in the fun and maybe even win!



INFAMOUS: SECOND SON



We've managed to spend plenty of time with Sucker Punch's *inFamous: Second*

Son now, so if you want to know all the secrets of Seattle or simply seek some tips on how to be the best Delsin Rowe that you can be, come and watch the masters in action. We have the power!

You Tube EXCLUSIVE VOICEOVERS

youtube.com/
PlayMagUK

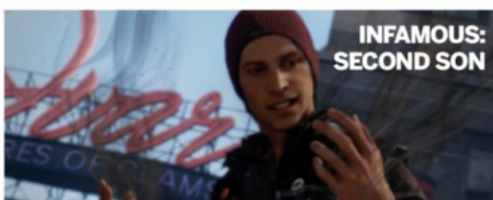
Subscribe to our channel for PlayStation video reviews and previews

DARK SOULS II



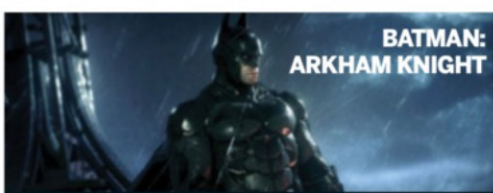
WE'VE COUNTED DOWN some of the most common ways to die in *Dark Souls II*. Learn what not to do!

INFAMOUS: SECOND SON



WE'VE TRACKED DOWN the five hardest trophies and put together a guide to help you do the same.

BATMAN: ARKHAM KNIGHT



HOW HAVE BATMAN videogames evolved over the years? We take a look, starting way back on the Spectrum...

GET EVEN

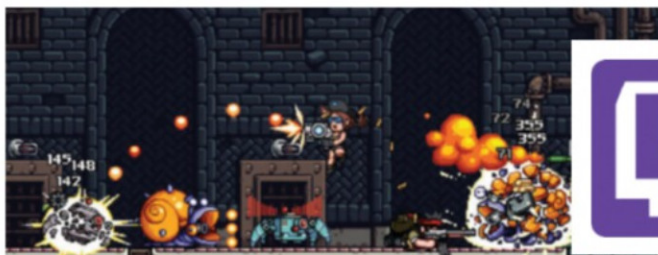


ONE OF THE best-looking games on PS4 is still a mystery. We've speculated some on what we might be able to expect.

THE ORDER: 1886

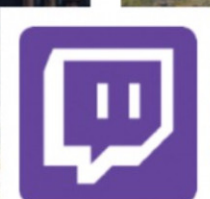


PLAYSTATION ALWAYS HAS the best exclusives, like this upcoming steampunk shooter from the guys behind the awesome PSP *God Of War* games. Railguns in Victorian London? Yes please.



MERCENARY KINGS

This month's PS Plus game is a mixture of *Contra*, *Metal Slug* and *Monster Hunter* that we absolutely adore. Come watch us take down the evil forces of CLAW and build amazing guns that look like toilets! It's got four-player co-op, so if you fancy playing with us, just drop us a line.



FINAL FANTASY XIV: A REALM REBORN

Now out in the wild and finally out of beta, *Final Fantasy XIV* will likely be something you'll catch us playing quite a lot of. As such, it'd be rude for us not to hit the Share button to let you see what the new endgame stuff looks like. That Leviathan fool is going down...

SHARING



PS4: THE COMPLETE MANUAL

If a monthly dose of *Play* isn't enough for you, check out Imagine's new bookazine, **PS4 The Complete Manual**. It's a complete guide to your console, from basic stuff through to advanced tips, along with a verdict on every game currently available. Pick it up for only £7.99 in any good mag retailer, or order one from www.greatdigitalmags.com.



DOWNLOAD PLAY BACK ISSUES

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NOWGAMER

All the breaking videogames news, exclusive videos and expert comment can be found on our multi-format website... www.nowgamer.com

PLAY+PLUS PlayList

IF YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT A GAME SCORED THEN THESE PAGES ARE FOR YOU

TEAM PICKS GUILTY PLEASURES



top five LUKE ALBIGÉS

- 1 Hatsune Miku: Project Diva f
- 2 Ribbit King
- 3 Skylanders Swap Force
- 4 Singstar
- 5 Prototype



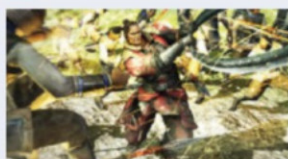
top five LIAM WARR

- 1 Buzz: Quiz TV
- 2 Red Card
- 3 Super Bust-A-Move 2
- 4 Peggle
- 5 WWE 2K14



top five STEVE HOLMES

- 1 Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons Of Liberty
- 2 Tom Clancy's HAWX
- 3 Assassin's Creed III
- 4 Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance
- 5 Lord Of The Rings: Conquest



top five SAM SMITH

- 1 Dynasty Warriors 8
- 2 Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons Of Liberty
- 3 WWE 2K14
- 4 Resident Evil 6
- 5 Lego Marvel Super Heroes

PS4 LISTING



GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag	237	83%
Battlefield 4	238	80%
Call Of Duty: Ghosts	238	75%
Dead Nation: Apocalypse Edition	242	74%
Don't Starve	240	81%
inFamous: Second Son	242	86%
Killzone Shadow Fall	238	80%
Knack	238	55%
Lego Marvel Super Heroes	238	85%
Metal Gear Solid V: Ground Zeroes	242	85%
Need For Speed Rivals	238	83%
Outlast	241	73%
Resogun	238	91%



An addictive and accomplished shoot-'em-up, *Resogun* is an indie delight and a surprise PS4 launch highlight. Awesome stuff.

Skylanders Swap Force	238	77%
Thief	241	70%
Tiny Brains	240	68%
War Thunder	239	80%

PS3 LISTING



007 Legends	225	44%
1942: Joint Strike	170	74%
3-On-3 NHL Arcade	177	62%
3D Dot Game Heroes	192	87%
50 Cent: Blood On The Sand	177	70%
Ace Combat: Assault Horizon	211	78%
The Adventures Of Tintin	212	58%
Afro Samurai	177	61%
After Burner Climax	193	91%
Agarest: Generations Of War	187	78%
Agarest: Generations Of War 2	223	43%
Agarest: Generations Of War Zero	209	52%
Age of Booty	172	81%
Air Conflicts: Secret Wars	208	58%
Alice: Madness Returns	207	57%
Alien Breed: Impact	196	80%
Alien Breed 2: Assault	201	82%
Alien Breed 3: Descent	204	61%
Aliens: Colonial Marines	230	45%
Aliens Vs Predator	189	79%
All Zombies Must Die!	214	64%
Alone In The Dark	173	70%
Alpha Protocol	193	83%
Amy	215	19%
Anarchy: Rush Hour	194	73%
Ape Escape	208	55%
Aquapazza: Aquaplay Dream Match	239	70%
Aqua Panic	193	68%
Arcana Heart 3	207	79%
Armageddon Riders	207	65%
Armored Core: For Answer	173	65%
Armored Core 4	153	67%
Armored Core V	217	60%
Army Of Two	164	80%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	188	65%
Army Of Two: The Devil's Cartel	231	44%
Ar Tonelico Qoga: Knell Of Ar Ciel	203	27%
Assassin's Creed	161	58%
Assassin's Creed II	186	89%
Assassin's Creed III	225	78%
Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood	199	91%
Assassin's Creed: Revelations	212	75%
Asura's Wrath	216	67%
Atelier Ayesha: The Alchemist Of Dust	230	60%
Atelier Rorona: The Alchemist Of Arland	198	77%
Backbreaker	193	70%
Back To The Future: It's About Time	204	71%

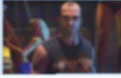
GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
The Baconing	210	72%
Band Hero	187	68%
Batman: Arkham Asylum	183	85%
Batman: Arkham City	211	94%
Batman: Arkham Origins	237	85%
Battle Fantasia	176	67%
Battlefield 1943	182	89%
Battlefield: Bad Company	168	78%
Battlefield: Bad Company 2	190	93%
Battlefield 3	212	88%
Battleship	219	44%
Bayonetta*	187	93%
The Beatles: Rock Band	184	96%
Beat Hazard Ultra	213	79%
Beat Skechter	201	85%
Beowulf	161	61%
Beyond Good & Evil HD	207	86%
Beyond: Two Souls	236	70%
Binary Domain	216	70%
Bionic Commando	179	82%
Bionic Commando Rearmed	169	88%
Bionic Commando Rearmed 2	203	61%
BioShock	172	93%
BioShock 2	189	88%
BioShock Infinite	230	97%
Birds Of Steel	217	55%
BlackSite	163	43%
Blacklight: Tango Down	200	64%
Blade Kitten	197	72%
Bladestorm: The Hundred Years' War	160	58%
Blast Factor	152	72%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger	190	85%
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift	198	94%
Blazing Angels	151	54%
Bleach: Soul Resurrección	209	63%
Blitz: The League II	172	67%
Blokus	202	54%
BloodRayne: Betrayal	211	62%
Blur	193	86%
Bodycount	210	54%
Bomberman Ultra	185	82%
Borderlands	185	80%
Borderlands 2	223	90%
 <i>Borderlands 2</i> is an excellent lesson in sequel-making and is easily one of 2012's best games.		
The Bourne Conspiracy	168	72%
Braid	188	93%
Brink	206	67%
Brother: A Tale Of Two Sons	233	83%
Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway	171	75%
Brütal Legend	185	79%
Bulletstorm	203	86%
The Bureau: XCOM Declassified	235	57%
Burnout Crash	211	79%
Burnout Paradise	162	74%
Burn Zombie Burn	178	85%
Buzz! Quiz TV	168	82%
Buzz! Quiz World	185	70%
Calling All Cars	155	81%
Call Of Duty 3	151	77%
Call Of Duty: World At War	173	68%
Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	160	88%
Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2	186	94%
Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 3	212	88%
Call Of Duty: Black Ops	199	94%
Call Of Duty: Black Ops II	226	80%
Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood	181	85%
Call Of Juarez: Gunslinger	232	80%
Call Of Juarez: The Cartel	208	30%
Captain America: Super Soldier	208	70%
Castle Crashers	200	88%
Castlevania: Harmony Of Despair	212	67%
Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow	197	85%
Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow 2	241	81%
Carnival Island	213	53%
Catan	195	85%
Cars 2	208	68%
The Cave	230	77%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Catherine	215	61%
Champion Jockey	210	50%
Chronicles Of Riddick: Assault On Dark Athena	178	87%
Child Of Eden	211	80%
Chime Super Deluxe	203	80%
Civilization Revolution	168	90%
Clash Of The Titans	193	65%
Clive Barker's Jericho	159	84%
The Club	163	80%
Colin McRae: DIRT	158	91%
Colin McRae: DiRT 2	184	87%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	178	65%
Commander's Challenge	185	68%
Command & Conquer	175	44%
Comet Crash	186	84%
Comix Zone	210	62%
Conan	160	71%
Condemned 2	165	78%
Costume Quest	199	70%
Conflict: Denied Ops	164	50%
Counter Strike: Global Offensive	223	89%
Crash Commando	174	80%
Crash Time 4: The Syndicate	218	37%
Crazy Machines Elements	210	71%
Create	199	71%
Crescent Pale Mist	200	70%
Critter Crunch	188	91%
Cross Edge	182	59%
Crystal Defenders	184	48%
Crysis 2	204	72%
Crysis 3	230	61%
Cubixx HD	207	76%
The Cursed Crusade	211	40%
Damnation	181	38%
Damage Inc: Pacific Squadron WWII	223	37%
Dance Dance Revolution	201	52%
Danganronpa: Trigger Happy Havoc	242	85%
Dante's Inferno	189	80%
Dark Mist	164	53%
The Darkness	154	91%
The Darkness II	215	76%
Dark Sector	165	62%
Dark Souls	211	90%
Dark Souls II	242	90%
Darkstalkers Resurrection	230	82%
Dark Void	188	81%
Darksiders	188	83%
Darksiders II	221	86%
DC Universe Online	202	80%
de Blob 2	203	65%
Dead Or Alive 5	223	78%
Dead Island	210	79%
Dead Island: Riptide	231	65%
Dead Rising 2	197	78%
Dead Rising 2: Off The Record	211	61%
Dead Space	172	87%
Dead Space 2	201	92%
Dead Space 3	228	70%
Dead Space: Extraction	203	88%
Dead Space: Ignition	199	47%
Dead To Rights: Retribution	192	68%
Deadly Premonition: The Director's Cut	231	82%
Dead Nation	201	86%
Deadpool	233	60%
DeathSpank	195	83%
Def Jam: Icon	151	79%
Def Jam Rapstar	199	72%
Defiance	231	50%
Demon's Souls	193	92%
Destroy All Humans!: Path Of The Furon	178	29%
Derrick The Deathfin	227	79%
Deus Ex: Human Revolution	209	91%
Devil May Cry 4	163	89%
Devil May Cry HD Collection	217	80%
Diablo III	235	89%
Digger HD	186	52%
DiRT 3	206	85%
DiRT Showdown	219	84%
Disgaea 3: Absence Of Justice	175	81%

THIS MONTH'S NEW ENTRIES

The newest games, freshly
squeezed among all your
old favourites

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Dishonored	224	92%
Disney Infinity	235	81%
DJ Hero	186	91%
DJ Hero 2	198	88%
Doctor Who: The Eternity Clock	220	32%
Doom 3: BFG Edition	225	69%
Double Dragon Neon	224	37%
DmC Devil May Cry	227	93%
 <i>DmC</i> injects new life into one of the best genres in all of gaming, and does so with a style and confidence that elevates it beyond its roots.		
Dragon Age: Origins	186	82%
Dragon Age II	203	86%
Dragon Ball: Raging Blast	186	40%
Dragon Ball Z: Burst Limit	168	61%
Dragon's Crown	235	87%
Driver: San Francisco	209	68%
Droplitz	184	91%
Duke Nukem Forever	207	33%
Dungeons & Dragons: Chronicles Of Mystara	233	80%
Dungeon Siege III	206	80%
Dust 514	233	51%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam	160	40%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 2	176	43%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 3	208	56%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	189	37%
Dynasty Warriors 6	164	30%
Dynasty Warriors 6: Empires	181	44%
Dynasty Warriors 7	204	32%
Dynasty Warriors 7: Empires	230	40%
Dynasty Warriors 8	234	71%
Earthworm Jim HD	196	89%
EA Sports Active 2	200	81%
EA Sports Grand Slam Tennis	215	75%
EA Sports MMA	198	89%
Eat Lead	178	38%
Eat Them!	202	60%
echochrome	169	85%
echochrome II	202	83%
EDF: Insect Armageddon	208	64%
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	152	91%
The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim	212	93%
Elefunk	170	45%
El Shaddai: Ascension Of The Metatron	208	77%
Enchanted Arms	152	69%
Enemy Territory: Quake Wars	168	60%
Enslaved: Odyssey To The West	197	83%
Epic Mickey 2: The Power Of Two	226	55%
Eternal Sonata	176	87%
Euforia	212	85%
Everybody's Golf 5	158	88%
Everybody's Golf: World Tour	165	91%
Explodemon	203	70%
Eye Of Judgment	159	65%
EyePet	185	83%
F1 2010	197	86%
F1 2011	211	71%
F1 2012	223	79%
F1 Race Stars	226	61%
FaceBreaker	170	55%
Fairytale Fights	186	51%
Fallout 3	173	97%
Fallout: New Vegas	198	88%
Family Guy: Back To The Multiverse	227	40%
Fantastic Four: Rise Of The Silver Surfer	155	39%
Far Cry 2	172	74%
Far Cry 3	226	88%
Far Cry 3: Blood Dragon	231	85%
Fat Princess	183	65%
Fatal Inertia EX	168	65%
FEAR	151	81%
FEAR 2: Project Origin	176	87%
FEAR 3	208	60%
FIFA 10	184	90%
FIFA 11	197	91%
FIFA 12	210	86%
FIFA 13	223	82%
FIFA 14	236	90%

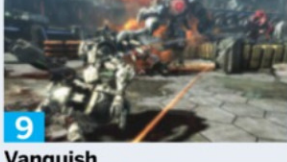
GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
FIFA Street (2012)	217	74%
FIFA Street 3	163	66%
Final Fight: Double Impact	193	90%
The Fight	199	42%
Fight Night Champion	203	88%
Fight Night Round 3	151	87%
Fight Night Round 4	181	84%
Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn	236	81%
Final Fantasy XIII	190	85%
Final Fantasy XIII-2	214	80%
Final Fantasy XIII: Lightning Returns	240	80%
Fist Of The North Star: Ken's Rage	198	51%
Fist Of The North Star: Ken's Rage 2	230	58%
Flight Control HD	198	85%
Flock!	179	70%
Folklore	158	66%
Formula One Championship Edition	151	72%
Fracture	171	72%
Front Mission Evolved	198	52%
Frogger: Hyper Arcade Edition	221	55%
From Dust	211	82%
Fuel	180	49%
Full Auto 2: Battlelines	151	69%
Fuse	232	73%
G-Force	183	59%
Game Of Thrones	220	39%
Galaxy Fight	215	27%
Gatling Gears	207	62%
Genji: Days Of The Blade	151	38%
Geon	175	71%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	83%
Ghost Recon Future Soldier	219	60%
Ghostbusters: The Videogame	180	80%
GI Joe	183	22%
The Godfather	151	37%
The Godfather II	178	38%
God Of War III	190	88%
God Of War: Ascension	230	90%
 With brilliantly reworked combat mechanics and stunning graphics, <i>Ascension</i> is a gloriously violent prequel to the series.		
God Of War Collection*	188	93%
God Of War Collection: Volume II	210	70%
The Golden Compass	162	32%
GoldenEye 007: Reloaded	213	63%
Gotham City Imposters	216	78%
Gran Turismo 5	200	85%
Gran Turismo 6	239	83%
Grand Theft Auto IV	166	98%
Grand Theft Auto V	236	97%
 Rockstar's latest is a masterpiece; the perfect swansong for the generation and a wonderful addition to the franchise.		
Greed Corp	191	75%
Greg Hastings Paintball 2	219	22%
Grid 2	232	79%
Green Day: Rock Band	194	77%
GTI Club+	174	72%
GTA: Episodes From Liberty City	191	94%
Guardians Of Middle-Earth	227	71%
Guitar Hero III	160	90%
Guitar Hero 5	184	81%
Guitar Hero: Aerosmith	168	63%
Guitar Hero Greatest Hits	182	76%
Guitar Hero Metallica	179	88%
Guitar Hero: Van Halen	189	65%
Guitar Hero: Warriors Of Rock	197	71%
Guitar Hero World Tour	173	95%
Gundemonium Collection	197	80%
Gunstar Heroes	181	85%
Hamsterball	194	72%
Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 1	200	21%
Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 2	208	37%
Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince	182	60%
Harry Potter And The Order Of The Phoenix	155	32%
Haze	167	64%
Heavenly Sword	157	71%
Heavy Rain	189	94%
Heavy Weapon	187	75%

inFamous: Second Son	86%
Metal Gear Solid V: Ground Zeroes	85%
The Last Of Us: Left Behind	81%
Dark Souls II	90%
Yaiba: Ninja Gaiden Z	35%
South Park: The Stick Of Truth	81%
Dead Nation: Apocalypse Edition	74%
Strider	62%
Danganronpa: Trigger Happy Havoc	85%

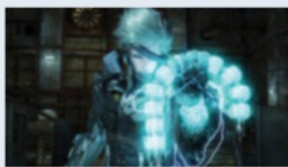
GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Heroes Over Europe	184	48%
Hitman: Absolution	225	93%
Hitman HD Trilogy	230	75%
Homefront	203	69%
The House Of The Dead 4	218	82%
The House Of The Dead: Overkill	212	75%
Hunted: The Demon's Forge	207	59%
Hustle Kings	190	87%
Hyperdimension Neptunia	202	21%
I Am Alive	217	64%
Ico & Shadow Of The Colossus HD	210	94%
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey	183	72%
The Incredible Hulk	168	52%
inFamous	180	81%
inFamous 2	207	83%
Inferno Pool	181	81%
Injustice: Gods Among Us	231	80%
International Cricket 2010	194	61%
Inversion	220	49%
Invincible Tiger: The Legend Of Han Tao	185	70%
Iron Man	166	58%
Iron Man 2	193	50%
The Jak And Daxter Trilogy	216	82%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
James Bond 007: Blood Stone	199	63%
James Cameron's Avatar: The Game	187	64%
JASF: Jane's Advanced Strike Fighters	217	30%
Journey	216	87%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	159	78%
Jurassic Park: The Game	194	60%
Just Cause 2	190	87%
Kane & Lynch: Dead Men	160	73%
Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days	196	71%
Katamari Forever	184	88%
Kick-Ass The Game	194	60%
Killer Is Dead	235	75%
Killzone HD	225	65%
Killzone 2	176	93%
Killzone 3	202	80%
Kingdom Hearts HD 1.5 ReMIX	236	80%
Kingdoms Of Amalur: Reckoning	215	70%
The King Of Fighters XII	182	82%
The King Of Fighters XIII	213	76%
Knights Contract	202	53%
Kung-Fu Live	201	42%
Kung Fu Panda 2	207	20%
Kung Fu Rider	196	65%
Lair	158	52%
Landit Bandit	195	66%
LA Noire	206	91%
Lara Croft And The Guardian Of Light	198	90%
The Last Guy	171	91%
Last Rebellion	191	42%
Lead And Gold: Gangs Of The Wild West	193	65%
Legend Of Spyro: Dawn Of The Dragon	174	54%
Legendary	173	62%
Lego Batman	173	65%
Lego Batman 2	221	80%
Lego Harry Potter: Years 1-4	194	79%
Lego Harry Potter: Years 5-7	213	67%
Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	167	73%
Lego Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	187	71%
Lego Pirates Of The Caribbean	206	76%
Lego Rock Band	187	75%
Lego Star Wars: The Complete Saga	160	76%
Lego Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	204	79%
Lego: The Lord Of The Rings	227	85%
Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust	180	24%
Limbo	209	90%
Linger In The Shadows	173	69%
LittleBigPlanet	172	94%
LittleBigPlanet 2	201	96%
LittleBigPlanet: Karting	225	85%
LocoRoco Cocoreccho!	159	80%
Lollipop Chainsaw	221	72%
London 2012	221	45%
The Lord Of The Rings: Aragorn's Quest	199	60%
The Lord Of The Rings: Conquest	175	52%
The Lord Of The Rings: War In The North	213	42%

*denotes import review

TOP TEN HARD GAMES

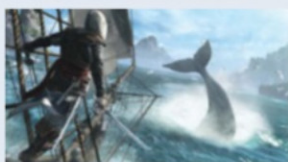
-  **1**
XCOM: Enemy Unknown
-  **2**
Dark Souls
-  **3**
Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance
-  **4**
Devil May Cry 3
-  **5**
The King Of Fighters XIII
-  **6**
Bayonetta
-  **7**
Demon's Souls
-  **8**
WipEout HD
-  **9**
Vanquish
-  **10**
Resogun

PLAY'S BEST GAMES IF YOU LOVE...



NANOMACHINES PLAY: METAL GEAR RISING: REVENGEANCE

Nanomachines, son! No game features more of these tiny robotic ne'er-do-wells than *Metal Gear Rising*, thanks to last boss Senator Armstrong. This buff politician is so full of nanomachines it's ridiculous.



SEA SHANTIES PLAY: ASSASSIN'S CREED IV: BLACK FLAG

ACIV is a great game, but the best bit of it is the awesome sea shanties your crew will sing as you sail the open waters. Take your radio stations and stick 'em, *GTA* – all we need is the sweet vocals of our crew.



PARRYING PLAY: STREET FIGHTER III: 3RD STRIKE ONLINE EDITION

There is no greater feeling in fighting games than landing a successful parry in *3rd Strike* and following up with a badass punish. It takes practice, but man, is it ever worth it.



SUPER SAIYANS PLAY: DRAGON BALL Z: BUDOKAI TENKAICHI 3

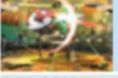
For our money the best *DBZ* game, *Budokai Tenkaichi 3* can be picked up cheap on PS2 these days. No game before or since has managed to capture the *DBZ* style quite as well.



FALLING TO YOUR DEATH PLAY: MIRROR'S EDGE

Sure, the point of *Mirror's Edge* is to NOT fall to your death, but it's still gonna happen quite a bit. So if for some weird reason you are into that, then plummet away to your heart's content!

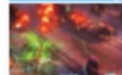
GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Lost Planet 2	192	75%
Lost Planet 3	236	58%
Lost Planet: Extreme Condition	163	69%
Lost: The Video Game	164	38%
Lumines Supernova	178	90%
Madagascar 3	224	39%
Madden NFL 10	184	82%
Madden NFL 11	196	84%
Madden NFL 12	209	85%
Madden NFL 13	223	86%
Madden NFL Arcade	188	58%
Mad Riders	220	70%
Mafia II	196	81%
MAG	189	68%
Magic: Duels Of The Planeswalker	202	84%
Magic: Duels Of The Planeswalker 2012	208	70%
Majin And The Forsaken Kingdom	199	72%
Marvel Vs Capcom 2	182	90%
Marvel Vs Capcom 3	202	88%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance	151	64%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	185	57%
Max Payne 3	219	77%
Mass Effect 2	201	97%
Mass Effect 3	216	93%
Matt Hazard: Blood Bath And Beyond	189	69%
Medal Of Honor	198	86%
Medal Of Honor Airborne	161	85%
Medal Of Honor: Warfighter	225	72%
Medieval Moves	213	47%
Mega Man 9	172	75%
Mega Man 10	192	82%
Mercenaries 2: World In Flames	171	78%
Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance	228	91%
 <i>Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance</i> is another world-class entry in gaming's most fundamentally playable genre.		
Metal Gear Solid 4	167	92%
Metal Gear Solid HD Collection	214	91%
Metro: Last Light	231	60%
Michael Jackson: The Experience	205	58%
Microbot	202	51%
Midnight Club: Los Angeles	173	84%
Mindjack	202	38%
Minecraft	240	93%
Mini Ninjas	184	80%
Mirror's Edge	173	71%
ModNation Racers	192	90%
Monkey Island 2: Special Edition	195	94%
Monster Madness	170	78%
Mortal Kombat	205	81%
Mortal Kombat Vs DC Universe	173	68%
MotoGP 10/11	204	64%
MotoGP 13	233	74%
Motorhead	173	60%
MotorStorm	151	92%
MotorStorm: Apocalypse	203	76%
MotorStorm: Pacific Rift	172	93%
Mud: FIM Motocross Championship	217	50%
MX Vs ATV Alive	206	42%
MX Vs ATV Reflex	189	68%
MX Vs ATV Untamed	164	58%
naif'd	201	61%
Namco Museum Essentials	193	60%
Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Storm	174	59%
Naruto Shippuden: UNS Generations	217	53%
Naruto Shippuden: UNS 3	230	85%
Naughty Bear	195	64%
NBA 2K12	211	88%
NBA 2K13	224	88%
NBA Jam	200	68%
NBA Live 09	170	81%
NBA Street: Homecourt	151	68%
Need For Speed Carbon	151	76%
Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit	199	91%
Need For Speed: Most Wanted	225	95%
 <i>Need For Speed: Most Wanted</i> is easily the best arcade racer of this generation. We absolutely love it.		
Need For Speed ProStreet	161	86%
Need For Speed Shift	184	81%
Need For Speed: The Run	213	63%
Need For Speed Undercover	173	75%
NeverDead	215	39%
Nier	192	54%
Ni No Kuni: Wrath Of The White Witch	227	85%
NHL 10	184	85%
NHL 11	198	89%
NHL 12	210	78%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
NHL 13	223	74%
NIGHTS Into Dreams...	224	75%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma	154	88%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2	184	82%
Ninja Gaiden 3	217	63%
Ninja Gaiden 3: Razor's Edge	231	80%
Noby Noby Boy	177	85%
No More Heroes: Heroes' Paradise	206	89%
Nucleus	155	82%
Numbblast	183	60%
Okami HD	225	90%
One Piece: Pirate Warriors	224	69%
Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising	185	78%
Operation Flashpoint: Red River	205	75%
The Orange Box	161	93%
Outland	207	72%
OutRun Online Arcade	180	80%
Overlord: Raising Hell	167	65%
Overlord II	181	68%
Pac-Man Championship Edition DX	201	91%
Pain	183	69%
Payday: The Heist	213	88%
Payday 2	235	79%
Peggle	189	94%
Persona 4 Arena	231	91%
 Essential for both <i>Persona</i> fans and fighting game enthusiasts, <i>Persona 4 Arena</i> is an absolute joy to play.		
PES 2010	185	72%
PES 2011	197	73%
PES 2012	210	74%
Pinballistik	215	75%
PixelJunk 4am	220	40%
PixelJunk Eden	169	67%
PixelJunk Shooter	187	93%
PixelJunk Shooter 2	204	90%
PixelJunk SideScroller	213	77%
Phineas & Ferb: Across The 2nd Dimension	211	66%
PixelJunk Racers	160	74%
Piyotama	162	62%
Planet Minigolf	196	58%
PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale	225	80%
PlayStation Move Heroes	204	54%
Poker Night 2	232	55%
POTC: At World's End	154	48%
Port Royale 3: Pirates & Merchants	224	54%
Portal 2	205	95%
Prince Of Persia	174	83%
Prince Of Persia: Classic	173	67%
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	193	68%
Prince Of Persia Trilogy	200	88%
Prison Break: The Conspiracy	191	40%
Prototype	181	76%
Prototype 2	219	75%
Puddle	216	76%
The Punisher: No Mercy	182	49%
Puppeteer	236	70%
Pure	171	80%
Pure Football	194	69%
Puzzle Chronicles	194	70%
Puzzle Dimensions	208	81%
Puzzle Quest Galactrix	181	68%
Quantum Conundrum	221	90%
Quantum Of Solace	175	57%
Quantum Theory	197	29%
Race Driver: GRID	167	85%
Ratchet & Clank: Q-Force	227	52%
Racket Sports	198	37%
Rag Doll Kung-Fu: Fists Of Plastic	179	83%
Rage	211	60%
Rainbow Moon	221	68%
Rainbow Six Vegas	155	88%
Rainbow Six Vegas 2	164	78%
Rango	203	54%
Ratchet & Clank: A Crack In Time	186	82%
Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One	211	68%
Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction	160	72%
Ratchet & Clank Trilogy HD	221	88%
Rayman Legends	235	83%
Rayman Origins	212	80%
Red Dead Redemption	193	92%
Red Faction: Armageddon	207	62%
Red Faction: Guerrilla	180	80%
Remember Me	232	61%
Renegade Ops	211	78%
Resident Evil Chronicles HD Collection	221	82%
Resident Evil Code Veronica X	211	72%
Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City	217	33%
Resident Evil: Revelations HD	232	71%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Resident Evil 4 HD	210	93%
Resident Evil 5	177	86%
Resident Evil 6	223	88%
Resistance: Fall Of Man	151	83%
Resistance 2	173	90%
Resistance 3	210	88%
Resonance Of Fate	191	79%
Retro City Rampage	228	78%
Revenge Of The Wounded Dragons	191	60%
Ridge Racer 7	151	75%
Ridge Racer Unbounded	217	67%
Riff: Everyday Shooter	162	86%
Rise Of The Argonauts	176	58%
Risen 2: Dark Waters	222	64%
Risk: Factions	202	80%
Rock Band Blitz	223	80%
Rock Band	169	94%
Rock Band 2	179	96%
Rock Band 3	199	84%
Rocket Knight	194	74%
Rocketmen" Axis Of Evil	165	63%
Rocksmith	223	78%
Rogue Warrior	188	09%
Rugby World Cup 2011	209	49%
Rune Factory Oceans	220	51%
RUSE	197	82%
The Saboteur	187	67%
Sacred 2: Fallen Angel	180	76%
Saints Row 2	172	79%
Saints Row: The Third	211	88%
SBK Generations	220	51%
Saint Selya: Sanctuary Battle	216	52%
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playground Ep1	194	90%
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playground Ep2	194	92%
Savage Moon	175	87%
Saw	186	52%
Saw II: Flesh & Blood	198	36%
Scott Pilgrim Vs The World	197	77%
The Secret Of Monkey Island SE	195	92%
Sega Rally Online Arcade	208	74%
Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection	177	85%
Section 8: Prejudice	209	80%
SBK 2011	206	70%
SBK Generations	220	54%
SBK X: Superbike World Championship	193	67%
Sega Rally	158	92%
Sengoku Basara: Samurai Heroes	198	76%
Shadows Of The Damned	207	79%
Shank	197	86%
Shatter	183	91%
Shaun White Skateboarding	198	70%
Shaun White Snowboarding	173	72%
Shellshock 2: Blood Trails	177	32%
Shift 2: Unleashed	204	66%
The Shoot	199	76%
Shoot Many Robots	217	81%
Silent Hill: Downpour	217	81%
Silent Hill HD Collection	217	76%
Silent Hill: Homecoming	174	64%
The Simpsons Arcade Game	216	54%
The Simpsons Game	160	82%
The Sims 3	199	87%
The Sims 3: Pets	212	70%
SingStar	159	80%
Singularity	195	80%
Siren Blood Curse	170	62%
Skate	159	86%
Skate 2	175	82%
Skate 3	192	86%
Skullgirls	218	88%
Sleeping Dogs	222	80%
The Sly Collection	200	84%
Sly Cooper: Thieves In Time	230	60%
Sniper Elite V2	218	52%
Sniper: Ghost Warrior	206	45%
Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2	230	55%
SOCOM: Special Forces	205	63%
Soldner-X-2: Final Prototypes	195	70%
Sonic Adventure	198	63%
Sonic Adventure 2	225	69%
Sonic CD	214	82%
Sonic The Hedgehog 4: Episode 1	199	82%
Sonic The Hedgehog 4: Episode 2	225	40%
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	190	78%
Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed	227	88%
Sonic Generations	212	70%
Sonic The Hedgehog	151	52%
Sonic Unleashed	175	48%
Sorcery	219	76%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
SoulCalibur IV	169	94%
SoulCalibur V	214	80%
South Park: The Stick of Truth	242	81%
Spec Ops: The Line	220	59%
Spider-Man 3	155	33%
Spider-Man: Edge Of Time	212	38%
Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions	197	69%
Spider-Man: Web Of Shadows	173	55%
Spin Jam	174	32%
Spatterhouse	200	58%
Splinter Cell Double Agent	153	79%
Split/Second: Velocity	192	90%
Sports Champions	196	83%
Sports Champions 2	225	65%
SSX	216	45%
Stacking	203	88%
Starhawk	219	81%
Star Ocean: The Last Hope International	190	63%
Star Trek	231	52%
Star Trek: D-A-C	189	57%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	171	65%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II	199	61%
Star Wars: Pinball	230	79%
Start The Party!	196	72%
Stormrise	178	51%
Stranglehold	159	65%
Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike Online Edition	209	92%
Street Fighter IV	176	95%
Street Fighter X Tekken	217	83%
Strength Of The Sword 3	234	81%
Strider	242	62%
Super Puzzle Fighter II Turbo Remix	168	78%
Super Rub-A-Dub	151	83%
Super Street Fighter IV: Arcade Edition	207	88%
Supersonic: Aerobatic Rocket Powered Battle Cars	177	65%
Stuntman: Ignition	157	82%
SuperCar Challenge	183	66%
Super Stardust HD	155	74%
Superstars V8: Next Challenge	190	55%
Superstars V8 Racing	181	63%
Super Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix	176	72%
Super Street Fighter IV	191	90%
Supremacy MMA	211	40%
Switchball	191	75%
Swords And Soldiers	199	88%
Syndicate	216	78%
Tales Of Graces f	222	77%
Tales Of Monkey Island	196	91%
Tales Of Xillia	234	70%
Tank Battles	186	68%
Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection Online	161	87%
Tekken 6	184	94%
Tekken Tag Tournament 2	223	90%
Test Drive Ferrari Racing Legends	221	60%
Tetris	202	84%
Test Drive Unlimited 2	203	62%
The Amazing Spider-Man	221	61%
The Last Of Us	233	94%
 When <i>The Last Of Us</i> is good (winter), it's better than anything else this gen – we do not say that lightly.		
The Last Of Us: Left Behind	242	81%
The Testament Of Sherlock Holmes	224	55%
The Walking Dead	231	92%
 <i>The Walking Dead</i> should be required playing for anyone who considers themselves a fan of our favourite medium.		
The Walking Dead: Survival Instinct	231	20%
Thor: God Of Thunder	206	38%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 14	231	61%
Time Crisis 4	166	69%
Time Crisis: Razing Storm	199	58%
TimeShift	162	72%
TMNT: Turtles In Time-Re-shelled	186	57%
TNA Impact!	171	71%
Tokyo Jungle	223	81%
Tom Clancy's EndWar	173	80%
Tom Clancy's HAWX	177	75%
Tom Clancy's HAWX 2	196	69%
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Blacklist	235	71%
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Trilogy HD	210	78%
Tomb Raider	229	90%
Tomb Raider Trilogy	204	86%
Tomb Raider: Underworld	173	83%
Tony Hawk's Project 8	151	85%
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater HD	223	73%
Tony Hawk's Proving Ground	160	72%
Tony Hawk: Ride	188	52%

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Top Darts	202	71%
Top Gun	198	53%
Top Gun: Hard Lock	218	45%
Top Spin 3	168	71%
Top Spin 4	203	60%
Topotai: Spinning Through Worlds	183	61%
Tornado Outbreak	186	56%
Toy Home	162	31%
Toy Story 3	195	82%
Transformers: Dark Of The Moon	208	64%
Transformers: Fall Of Cybertron	223	73%
Transformers: War For Cybertron	194	80%
Trash Panic	181	79%
Trials Of Topaq	159	50%
Trine	184	85%
Trinity: Souls Of Zill O'll	202	56%
Trinity Universe	194	61%
Tron Evolution	200	17%
Tumble	198	70%
Turning Point: Fall Of Liberty	165	40%
Turok	163	46%
TV Superstars	199	53%
Twisted Metal	216	68%
Two Worlds II	203	64%
UFC Undisputed 2009	180	90%
UFC Undisputed 2010	193	88%
UFC Undisputed 3	215	82%
Ultimate Marvel Vs Capcom 3	212	78%
Uncharted: Drake's Fortune	161	87%
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves	185	96%
Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception	212	90%
Under Seige	207	71%
Unearthed: Trail Of Ibn Battuta: Ep1	233	05%
The Unfinished Swan	225	78%
Unreal Tournament III	162	88%
Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom	151	54%
Uno	189	85%
Vagrent Story	189	82%
Valkyria Chronicles	173	82%
Vancouver 2010	189	76%
Vandel Hearts: Flames of Judgement	192	87%
Vanquish	197	93%
Viking: Battle For Asgard	165	74%
Virtua Fighter 5	151	83%
Virtua Fighter 5: Final Showdown	220	90%
Virtua Tennis 3	150	91%
Virtua Tennis 4	205	79%
Wakeboarding HD	195	65%
The Walking Dead: All That Remains	240	89%
The Walking Dead: 400 Days	234	83%
Wanted: Weapons Of Fate	179	63%
Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine	210	51%
Warhawk	157	84%
Warriors: Legends Of Troy	202	14%
Warriors Orochi 3	217	59%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
Way Of The Samurai 3	190	16%
Wet	184	41%
Wheelman	178	72%
Where The Wild Things Are	188	56%
White Knight Chronicles	190	55%
White Knight Chronicles II	207	49%
Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?	214	79%
Wipeout HD	172	84%
Wizorb	222	78%
Wolfenstein	183	72%
Wonderbook: Book Of Spells	226	80%
Worms Collection	224	85%
Worms 2: Armageddon	198	87%
Worms Balite Islands	201	80%
Worms Crazy Golf	213	82%
Worms Ultimate Mayhem	217	80%
WRC: FIA World Rally Championship	197	76%
WRC 2: FIA World Rally Championship	211	63%
WRC 3 FIA World Rally Championship	225	75%
WSC Real 11	204	69%
WWE All Stars	204	82%
WWE Legends Of WrestleMania	178	80%
WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2010	185	77%
WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2011	199	63%
WWE 12	212	50%
WWE 13	225	55%
X-Blades	178	54%
XCOM: Enemy Unknown	224	94%



Thinking, planning, failing and dying is back in fashion: XCOM is a phenomenal reimagining of a classic title and an instant classic in its own right.

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
X-Men Arcade	203	60%
X-Men Destiny	211	35%
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	179	71%
Yaiba: Ninja Gaiden Z	242	35%
Yakuza: Dead Souls	216	60%
Yakuza 3	191	80%
Yakuza 4	203	79%
Yar's Rev	206	57%
Zen Pinball 2	224	90%
Zombie Apocalypse: Never Die Alone	213	69%
Zone Of The Enders HD Collection	226	81%
Zuma	182	78%

PS VITA LISTING



GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
A-Men	217	70%
Army Corps Of Hell	217	64%
Assassin's Creed III: Liberation	225	76%
Atelier Meruru: The Apprentice Of Arland	221	35%
Everybody's Golf	215	86%
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift Extend	216	85%
Call Of Duty: Black Ops Declassified	227	18%
Dead Nation	201	86%
Dokuro	230	71%
Earth Defense Force 2017 Portable	230	82%
Escape Plan	216	81%
FIFA Football	216	80%
fIOW	151	90%
Flower	176	85%
Gravity Crash	187	85%
Gravity Rush	219	86%
Hotline Miami	233	85%
Hustle Kings	216	81%
Joe Danger	194	96%
Killzone: Mercenary	236	88%
LittleBigPlanet	223	93%
Little Deviants	215	69%
Lumines Electric Symphony	216	85%
MGS HD Collection	221	70%
ModNation Racers: Road Trip	215	59%
Mortal Kombat	219	83%
MotorStorm RC	217	81%
Muramasa Rebirth	234	80%
New Little King's Story	224	70%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma Plus	217	72%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2 Plus	230	60%
Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath HD	214	86%
Orgarhythm	230	55%
PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale	225	80%
Persona 4 Golden	228	94%
PixelJunk Monsters	163	94%
Puddle	222	82%
Rayman Origins	216	84%
Reality Fighters	215	52%
Resistance: Burning Skies	219	54%
Ridge Racer	216	48%
Rocketbirds: Hardboiled Chicken	212	82%
Silent Hill: Book Of Memories	225	32%
Sorcery Saga: Curse of the Great Curry God	240	70%
Soul Sacrifice	232	85%
Sound Shapes	223	88%
Superfrog HD	234	41%
Super Monkey Ball: Banana Splitz	224	78%
Sumoni: Demon Arts	230	46%
Super Stardust Delta	216	84%
Tearaway	239	80%
Terraria	232	85%
Touch My Katamari	216	83%
Toukiden: The Age Of Demons	241	86%
Ultimate Marvel vs Capcom 3	216	80%
Uncharted: Fight For Fortune	227	83%
Uncharted: Golden Abyss	215	83%
Unit 13	216	67%
Velocity Ultra	233	80%
Virtua Tennis 4: World Tour Edition	215	81%
Virtue's Last Reward	227	84%
Wipeout 2048	215	87%

*denotes import review

PLAYING THE PLAYLIST

Watch out! Games!



WHAT (have they been playing?)

Dark Souls II

WHY (was it chosen?)

There are still invasions to do

LUKE ALBIGÉS

I PRETTY MUCH

kicked all of *Dark Souls* //s ass on the review build but sadly, the online functions weren't available for most of my early time in Drangleic. Now, though, in the comfort of my own home, I'm able to fully put the Covenants through their paces and the online community is awesome. I've still not settled on a favourite (nothing quite scratches my Gravelord itch) but the level of respect in PvP is wonderful – pretty much everyone I've duelled has had the courtesy to bow before we fight, and I naturally reciprocate. As much as I dig the sportsmanship there, I'm warming towards the troll Covenants, Rat King and Bell Keepers. Honourable duelling is all well and good, but I just love luring hapless fools into my acid-soaked, rat-infested lair. I'm a wrong'un like that.



WHAT (have they been playing?)

Dark Souls II

WHY (was it chosen?)

Because it's *Dark Souls* II!

SAM SMITH

IT'S NO SECRET that

I love *Dark Souls*, so it's equally unsurprising that I'm pumping a huge amount of time into the awesome sequel. It's a tiny bit less amazing than the first, but I'm still in love with *Dark Souls II* and won't be stopping until I get that Platinum. I'm a pro, after all.

EVERY GAME. EVERY FORMAT. ONE CHOICE

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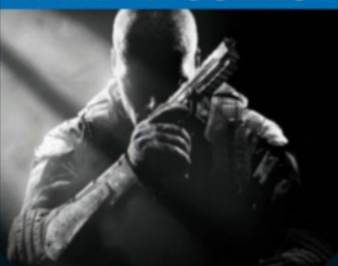
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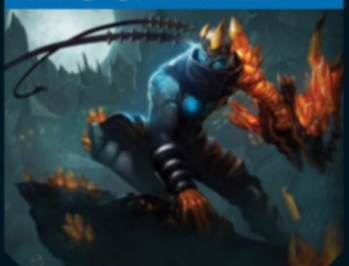
IN-DEPTH GUIDES



BIG INTERVIEWS



MMO CHANNEL



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THE ORDER: 1886

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Sony's stunning shooter

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